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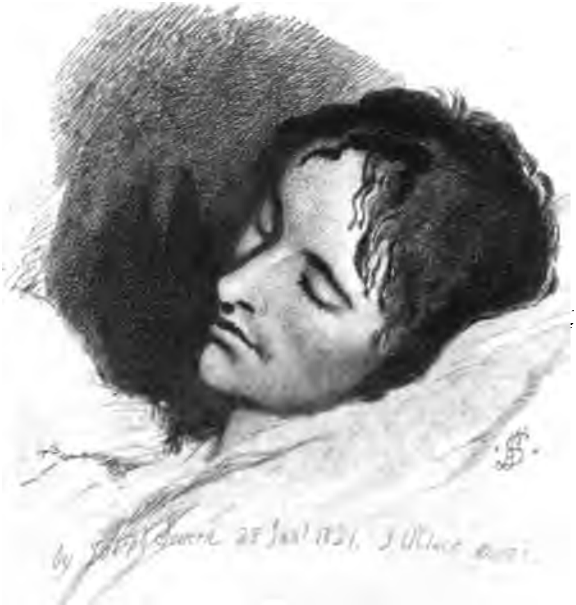
KEATS'S WORKS—VOLUME IV

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
  From the deep throat of sad Melpomene!
Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
  And touch the strings into a mystery;
Sound mournfully upon the winds and low;...


JS
by Joseph Severn 28 Jan^y 1821. 3 o'Clock morn.

THE POETICAL WORKS
AND OTHER WRITINGS
OF
JOHN KEATS

NOW FIRST BROUGHT TOGETHER
INCLUDING POEMS AND NUMEROUS LETTERS
NOT BEFORE PUBLISHED

EDITED
WITH NOTES AND APPENDICES
BY
HARRY BUXTON FORMAN

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME IV

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MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS.

MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS.

CXIII.

To GEORGE KEATS.

Winchester, September, Friday.
[17 September 1819.]

My Dear George:

I was closely employed in reading and composition in this place whither I had come from Shanklin for the convenience of a library, when I received your last, dated July 24. You will have seen by the short letter I wrote from Shanklin how matters stand between us and Mrs. Jennings. They had not at all moved, and I knew no way of overcoming the inveterate obstinacy of our

---

This letter is given from the New York *World* of the 25th and 26th of June 1877, in which it was cut up and scattered about with a great deal of unnecessary mystification, not to mention numerous blunders arising from simple ignorance. It would seem as if the wish to make one letter appear like several, and magnify the material at command, had induced the correspondent of the paper in question to dismember the letter; and of course I cannot be certain that I have invariably put it together as it was written. As to the genuineness of the whole letter I have not the remotest doubt, nor as to the dates of its composition. It was begun on Friday the 17th of September 1819, a week after Keats had hurried to Town on receipt of George's letter of the 24th of July: this date we learn from the letter to Fanny Brawne of Monday the 13th of September 1819, in which he says he came by last Friday's coach. On Friday the 24th he was writing another part of the letter, after intervals; and there was no other Friday than the 17th on which he could have begun it.

affairs. On receiving your last I immediately took a place in the same night's coach for London. Mr. Abbey behaved extremely well to me, appointed Monday evening at 7 to meet me, and observed that he should drink tea at that hour. I gave him the enclosed note and showed him the last leaf of yours to me. He really appeared anxious about it; promised he would forward your money as quickly as possible. I think I mentioned that Walton was dead. He will apply to Mr. Glidden, the partner, endeavor to get rid of Mrs. Jennings's claim, and be expeditious. He has received an answer to my letter to Fry—that is something. We are certainly in a very low estate. I say we, for I am in such a situation that were it not for the assistance of Brown and Taylor I must be as badly off as a man can be. I could not raise any sum by the promise of any poem—no, not by the mortgage of my intellect. We must wait a little while. I really have hopes of success. I have finished a tragedy,[1] which if it succeeds will enable me to sell what I may have in manuscript to a good advantage. I have passed my time in reading, writing and fretting—the last I intend to give up and stick to the other two. They are the only chances of benefit to us. Your wants will be a fresh spur to me. I assure you you shall more than share what I can get, whilst I am still young—the time may come when age will make me more selfish. I have not been well-treated by the world—and yet I have, capitally well. I do not know a person to whom so many purse-strings would fly open as to me—if I could possibly take advantage of them, which I cannot do, for none of the owners of these purses are rich. Your present situation I will not suffer myself to dwell upon—

---

[1] *Otho the Great.*

when misfortunes are so real we are glad enough to escape them and the thought of them. I cannot help thinking Mr. Audubon[1] a dishonest man. Why did he make you believe that he was a man of property? How is it his circumstances have altered so suddenly? In truth I do not believe you fit to deal with the world, or at least the American world. But, good God, who can avoid these chances? You have done your best. Take matters as coolly as you can, and, confidently expecting help from England, act as if no help was nigh. Mine, I am sure, is a tolerable tragedy[2]; it would have been a bank to me if, just as I had finished it, I had not heard of Kean's resolution to go to America. That was the worst news I could have had. There is no actor can do the principal character[3] besides Kean. At Covent Garden there is a great chance of its being damn'd. Were it to succeed even there, it would lift me out of the mire. I mean the mire of a bad reputation which is continually rising against me. My name with the literary fashionables is vulgar; I am a weaver-boy to them. A tragedy would lift me out of this mess. And mess it is, as far as regards our pockets. But be not cast down any more than I am. I feel I can bear real ills better than imaginary ones. Whenever I find myself growing vaporish I rouse myself, wash and put on a clean shirt, brush my hair and clothes, tie my shoestrings neatly, and, in fact, adonize as if I were going out—then, all clean and comfortable, I sit down to write. This I find the greatest relief. Besides, I am becoming accustomed to the privation of the pleasures of sense. In the midst of the world I live like a hermit. I have forgot how to lay plans for enjoyment of any pleasure. I feel that I can bear anything, any misery, even imprisonment, so long as I have neither wife nor child. Perhaps you will say yours are your only comfort—they must be. I returned to Winchester the day before yesterday,[1] and am now here alone. On Monday morning I went to Walthamstow.[2] Fanny look'd better than I had seen her for some time. She complains of not hearing from you, appealing to me as if it was half my fault. I had been so long in retirement that London appeared a very odd place. I could not make out I had so many acquaintance, and it was a whole day before I could feel among men. I had another strange sensation, there was not one house I felt any pleasure to call at. Reynolds was in the country, and, saving himself, I am prejudiced against all that family.[3] Dilke and his wife and child were in the country. Taylor was at Nottingham. I was out and everybody was out. I walk'd about the streets as in a strange land. Rice[4] was the only one at home. I pass'd some time with him. I know him better since we have liv'd a month together in the Isle of Wight. He is the most sensible and even wise man I know; he has a few John Bull prejudices, but they improve him. His illness is at times alarming. We are great friends, and there is no one I like to pass a day with better. Martin call'd in to bid him good-by before he set out for Dublin. If you would like to hear one of his jokes, here is one which at the time we laughed at a good deal. A Miss ——, with three young ladies, one of them Martin's sister, had come a-gadding in the Isle of Wight, and took for a few days a cottage opposite ours. We dined with them one day, and, as I was saying, they had fish. Miss —— said she thought they tasted of the boat. "No," says Martin, very seriously, "they haven't been kept long enough." I saw H.; he is very much occupied with love and business, being one of Mr. Saunders's executors and lover to a young woman. He showed me her picture by Severn. I think she is, though not very cunning, too cunning for him.

---

[1] The naturalist.

[2] It is worth noting how entirely Keats adopts this joint production—as if he had not let Brown have much hand in it.

[3] The part of Ludolph, Otho's son.

---

[1] He told Fanny Brawne on the 13th that he should return the next day; but I presume he had to postpone his return till the 15th.

[2] In the New York *World*, *Wallhamston*, which of course Keats did not write.

[3] The matter of Miss Cox was probably still fresh in his recollection. See pages 238-40 of Volume III.

[4] The correspondent of *The World* says *Price*; but the reference is obviously to James Rice.

Nothing strikes me so forcibly with a sense of the ridiculous as love. A man in love I do think cuts the sorryest figure in the world. Even when I know a poor fool to be really in pain about it I could burst out laughing in his face. His pathetic visage becomes irresistible. Not that I take H. as a pattern for lovers; he

---

I have no knowledge as to the names omitted from this story of the fish, and no idea as to the occult reasons for omitting them. Who the "H." was whose name is with more obvious cause omitted lower down, I must leave the reader to choose among the many H's of Keats's circle. The Martin referred to was John Martin of the firm of Rodwell and Martin—publishers and booksellers of Holles Street, Cavendish Square. Mr. Martin was friendly with Reynolds, Rice, and Bailey, as well as with Keats, and was a constant visitor at Little Britain, where he was well thought of. Though not himself an intellectual man, and though something of an epicure, he appeared to relish the brilliant society of the circle of friends as well as the material good things his weakness for which was a frequent topic of friendly "chaff." He has been dead many years; but I have no information as to dates connected with this worthy.

is a very worthy man and a good friend. His love is very amusing. Somewhere in the *Spectator* is related an account of a man inviting a party of stutterers and squinters to his table. It would please me more to scrape together a party of lovers, not to dinner, no, to tea. There would be no fighting as among Knights of old.

> Pensive they sit, and roll their languid eyes,
> Nibble their toast, and cool their tea with sighs, &c.[1]

You see I cannot get on without writing, as boys do at school, a few nonsense verses. I begin them and before I have written six the whim has pass'd—if there is anything deserving so respectable a name in them. I shall put in a bit of information anywhere just as it strikes me. Mr. Abbey is to write to me as soon as he can bring matters to bear, and then I am to go to town to tell him the means of forwarding to you through Capper and Haglewood. I wonder I did not put this before. I shall go on to-morrow; it is so fair now I must take a bit of a walk.

Saturday [18 September 1819].—With my inconstant disposition it is no wonder that this morning, amid all our bad times and misfortunes, I should feel so alert and well-spirited. At this moment you are perhaps in a very different state of mind. It is because my hopes are very paramount to my despair. I have been reading over a part of a short poem I have composed lately, call'd "Lamia," and I am certain there is that sort of fire in it which must take hold of people in some way—give them either pleasant or unpleasant sensation. What they want is a sensation of some sort. I wish I could pitch the key of your spirits as high as mine is, but your organ-loft is beyond the reach of my voice. I admire the exact admeasurement of my niece in your mother's letter—O the little span-long elf—I am not the least judge of the proper weight and size of an infant. Never trouble yourselves about that: she is sure to be a fine woman. Let her have only delicate nails both on hands and feet and teeth as small as a mayfly's, who will live you his life on a square inch of oak-leaf. And nails she must have quite different from the marketwomen here, who plough into the butter and make a quarter pound taste of it. I intend to write a letter to your wife on this little plump subject—I hope she's plump. "Still harping on my daughter!"[1] This Winchester is a place tolerably well suited to me: there is a fine cathedral, a college, a Roman Catholic chapel, a Methodist do., an Independent do.; and there is not one loom or anything like manufacturing beyond bread and butter in the whole city. There are a number of rich Catholics in the place. It is a respectable, ancient, aristocratical place, and moreover it contains a nunnery. Our set are by no means so hail fellow well met on literary subjects as we were wont to be. Reynolds has turn'd to the law. Bye-the-bye, he brought out a little piece at the Lyceum call'd "One, two, three, four, by advertisement."[2] It met with complete success. The meaning of this odd title is explained when I tell you the principal actor is a mimic who takes off four of our best performers in the course of the farce.

---

[1] See Volume II, pages 349-50.

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[1] *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene II.

[2] The title of the piece in question is *One, Two, Three, Four, Five: By Advertisement, a Musical Entertainment in one Act.* It held the stage firmly enough to be included in Cumberland's *British Theatre*, where it is stated that the play was written for John Reeve, and brought out at the English Opera, with him in the principal part, on the 17th of July 1819. The following abstract of the fable is added:—"Mr. Coupleton wishing to retire from the bustle and turmoil of a city life, and enjoy the country and spring-tide, '*solus cum sola* with his lovely May,' advertises for a husband for his daughter; a young lady of *a thousand* in point of *mental* accomplishments, and of *ten thousand* in a *pecuniary* sense. Miss

---

Sophy, however, anticipating her papa, has secured to herself a lover, in the person of Harry Alias, a theatrical amateur. To punish the match-maker for his indecorous mode of proceeding in an affair of so much delicacy, and promote his own views, Mr. Alias resolves to answer the advertisement, by waiting upon Old Coupleton in a variety of characters; and Sir Peter Teazle, Dr. Endall, Sam Dabbs, and Buskin, appear successively before him, in the persons of *Farren*, *Harley*, *Munden*, and *Mathews*, all of whom were aped with wonderful fidelity. In Buskin, *Mr. Reeve* also introduced imitations of *John Kemble*, *Kean*, and *Liston;* and sang '*Hope told a flattering tale*' more musically, but with the peculiar *affettuoso*, vis-comica, and grotesque expression of the last-named incomparable droll. Perplexed and puzzled with the pertinacity of Sir Peter, the physical ferocity of Endall, the vulgarity of Sam Dabbs, and the eternal bustle and chatter of Buskin, Mr. Coupleton commands Harry Alias to be called up, and bestows upon him his daughter in marriage. The farce concludes with a wedding, and the old gentleman's forgiveness (for Alias is too vain of his prowess to keep his secret), for the hoax played off at his expense." Like all Reynolds's work, this trifle is sprightly and brilliant. In the opening scene Sophy sings the following dainty song:—

When lovers' eyes are young and light,
  This world is all a world of dreams;
Where all is tremulous and bright,
  Like moonlight on the summer streams:
The trees a softer music make,
  The sky is of a sweeter blue;
Oh, lovers' eyes, for beauty's sake,
  See fairy stars in evening's dew.
And light romantic dreams are mine,
  In the green shadow of these leaves;
And fancy in the day's decline
  Her airy web of beauty weaves:
A music in the winds I hear,
  A sweeter blue is in the skies;
Ah, mine's a lover's heart, I fear,—
  And mine, I fear, are lover's eyes!

Our stage is loaded with mimics. I did not see the piece, being out of town the whole time it was in progress. Dilke is entirely swallowed up in his boy. 'Tis really lamentable to what a pitch he carries a sort of parental mania. I had a letter from him at Shanklin. He went on a word or two about the Isle of Wight, which is a bit of [a] hobby horse of his, but he soon deviated to his boy. "I am sitting," says he, "at the window, expecting my boy from school." I suppose I told you somewhere that he lives in Westminster, and his boy goes to school there, where he gets beaten, and every bruise he has, and I dare say deserves, is very bitter to Dilke. When I left Mr. Abbey on Monday evening I walk'd up Cheapside, but returned to put some letters in the post, and met him again in Bucklersbury. We walk'd together through the Poultry as far as the hatter's shop he has some concern in. He spoke of it in such a way to me I thought he wanted me to make an offer to assist him in it. I do believe if I could be a hatter I might be one. He seems anxious about me. He began blowing up Lord Byron while I was sitting with him. "However," says he, "the fellow says true things now and then;" at which he took up a magazine and read me some extracts from "Don Juan" (Lord Byron's last flash poem), and particularly one against literary ambition. I do think I must be well spoken of among sets, for Hodgkinson is more than polite, and the coffee-German endeavour'd to be very close to me the other night at Covent Garden, where I went at half price before I tumbl'd into bed. Every one, however distant an acquaintance, behaves in the most conciliating manner to me. You will see I speak of this as a matter of interest.

On the next sheet I will give you a little politics.

In every age there have been in England for two or three centuries subjects of great popular interest on the carpet, so that however great the uproar one can scarcely prophesy any material change in the Government, for as loud disturbances have agitated this country many times. All civilized countries become gradually more enlightened, and there should be a continual change for the better. Look at this country at present, and remember when it was even impious to doubt the justice of a trial by combat. From that time there has been a gradual change. Three great changes have been in progress. First for the better, next for the worst, and a third time for the better once more. The first was the gradual annihilation of the tyranny of the nobles, when kings found it their interest to conciliate the common people, elevate them and be just to them. Next when baronial power ceased and before standing armies were so dangerous, taxes were few. Kings were lifted by the people over the heads of their nobles, and those people held a rod over kings. The change for the worst in Europe was again this. The obligation of kings to the multitude began to be forgotten. Custom had made noblemen the humble servants of kings. Then kings turned to the nobles as the adorners of their power, the slaves of it, and from the people as creatures continually endeavoring to check them. Then in every kingdom there was a long struggle of kings to destroy all popular privileges. The English were the only people in Europe who made a grand kick at this. They were slaves under Henry VIII., but were freemen under William III. at the time the French were abject slaves under Lewis XIV. The example of England and the liberal writers of France and England sowed the seed of opposition to this tyranny, and it was swelling in the ground till it burst out in the French Revolution. That has had an unlucky termination. It put a stop to the rapid progress of free sentiments in England, and gave our Court hopes of turning back to the despotism of the sixteenth century. They have made a handle of this event in every way to undermine our freedom. They spread a horrid superstition against all innovation and improvement. The present struggle in England of the people is to destroy this superstition. What has roused them to do it is their distress. Perhaps on this account the present distresses of this nation are a fortunate thing —though so horrid in their experience. You will see that I mean that the French Revolution put a temporary stop to this third change—the change for the better. Now it is in progress again, and I think in an effectual one. This is no contest between Whig and Tory, but between right and wrong.

There is scarcely a grain of party spirit now in England. Right and wrong considered by each man abstractedly is the fashion. I know very little of these things. I am convinced, however, that apparently small causes make great alterations. These are little signs whereby we may know how things are going on. This makes the business about Carlile, the bookseller, of great moment in my mind. He has been selling deistical pamphlets, republished Tom Payne [*sic*] and many other works held in superstitious horror. He even has been selling for some time immense numbers of a work called "The Deist," which comes out in weekly numbers. For this conduct he, I think, has had above a dozen indictments issued against him, for which he has found bail to the amount of many thousand pounds. After all, they are afraid to prosecute; they are afraid of his defence; it would be published in all the papers all over the empire; they shudder at this; the trial would light a flame they could not extinguish. Do you not think this of great import?

You will hear by the papers of the proceedings at Manchester and Hunt's triumphal entry into London.[1] It would take me a whole day and a quire of paper to give you anything like detail. I will merely mention that it is calculated that 30,000 people were in the streets waiting for him. The whole distance from the Angel at Islington to the Crown and Anchor was lined with multitudes. As I passed Colnaghi's window I saw a profile portrait of Sandt,[2] the destroyer of Kotzebue. His very look must interest every one in his favor. I suppose they have represented him in his college dress. He seems to me like a young Abelard—a fine mouth, cheekbones (and this is no joke) full of sentiment, a fine unvulgar nose and plump temples. On looking over some old letters I found the one I wrote intended for you from the foot of Helvellyn to Liverpool, but you had sailed, and therefore it was returned to me. It contained, among other nonsense, an acrostic of my sister's name—and a pretty long name it is. I wrote it in a great hurry, as you will see. Indeed, I would not copy it if I thought it would ever be seen by any but yourselves.[1]

---

[1] The mention of Henry Hunt's entry into London has been adduced as an anachronism in evidence against the genuineness of this letter. It is true that the "Orator" of Manchester Massacre fame ended an imprisonment of two years and a half on the 30th of October 1822 and made an "entry into London" on the 11th of November 1822; but the trial of which his imprisonment was the issue had not taken place till the spring of 1820; and the entry alluded to by Keats was one which took place between the Massacre and the trial. Carlile, in *The Republican*, speaks of 300,000 people as taking part in the demonstration.

[2] In *The World*, *Sands*; but it is extremely unlikely that Keats made that blunder. The democratic party was greatly interested in this young man, whose assassination of a conservative champion, and expiation of his crime on the scaffold, gave him a place in the democratic martyrology, notwithstanding his attempt to commit suicide.

I sent you in my first packet some of my Scotch letters. I find I have one kept back, which was written in the most interesting part of our tour, and will copy parts of it in the hope you will not find it unamusing. I would give now anything for Richardson's power of making mountains of mole-hills.

Incipit Epistola Caledoniensa.

Derrynaculen.[2]

Just after my last had gone to the post, in came one of the men with whom we endeavored to agree about going to Staffa. He said what a pity it was we should turn aside and not see the curiosities. So we had a little talk, and finally agreed that he should be our guide across the Isle of Mull. We set out, crossed two ferries—one to the isle of Kerrera,[3] of a short distance, the other from Kerrera[3] to Mull, nine miles across. We did it in forty minutes with a fine breeze. The road, or rather the track, through the island is the most dreary you can think of—between dreary mountains, over bog and rock and river, with our trousers tucked up and our stockings in hand. About 8 o'clock we arrived at a shepherd's hut, into which we could scarcely get for the smoke, through a door lower than my shoulders. We found our way into a little compartment, with the rafters and turf-thatch blackened with smoke, the earth floor full of hills and dales. We had some white bread with us, made a good supper and slept in our clothes in some blankets; our guide snored in another little bed about an arm's-length off. This next morning we have come about six miles to breakfast by rather a better path and are now, by comparison, in a mansion. Our guide is a very obliging fellow. In our way this morning he sang us two Gaelic songs—one made by a Mrs. Brown on her husband being drowned, the other a Jacobite one on Charles Stuart.

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[1] Here follows the Acrostic, for which see Volume II, pages 283-4.

[2] *The World* has *Dimancullen*, which is of course wrong: see foot-note at page 198 of Volume III. As regards the inconsistencies between this and the Derrynaculen letter to Thomas Keats (more supposed evidence against the genuineness of the whole affair), it should be remembered that Keats is only copying *parts* of a longer letter, fourteen months after the events related took place, and may very well have even transferred the "old schoolmaster" from Iona to Staffa—if indeed the Maclean of four feet one and a half inches high did not go with them from the one place to the other.

[3] In *The World*, *Kenara.*

July 26 [1818].—We had a most wretched walk across the island of Mull, and then we crossed to Iona, or Icolmkill.[1] From Icolmkill we took a boat at a bargain to take us to Staffa and after to land us at the head of Loch Nakeal, whence we should only have to walk half the distance to Oban again and by a better road. All this is well passed and done with this singular piece of luck that there took place an intermission in the bad weather just as we came in sight of Staffa, on which it is impossible to land but in a tolerably calm sea. The old schoolmaster, an ignorant little man, but reckoned very clever, showed us about. He is a Maclean, and is as much above four foot as he is under four foot three. He stops at one glass of whiskey unless you press a second, and at the second, unless you press a third. I am puzzled how to give you an idea of Staffa. It can only be represented by a first-rate drawing. One may compare the surface of the island to a roof. The roof is supported by grand pillars of basalt standing together as thick as honeycombs. The finest thing is Fingal's Cave; it is entirely a breaking away of basalt pillars. Suppose, now, the giants who came down to the daughters of men had taken a whole mass of these columns and bound them together like bunches of matches, and then with immense axes had made a cavern in the body of these columns. Such is Fingal's Cave, except that the sea has done this work of excavation and is continually dashing there. So that we walk along the sides of the cave on the heads of the shortest pillars which are left as for convenient stairs. The roof is arched somewhat Gothic-wise, and the length of some of the entire pillars is fifty feet. About the island you might seat an army of men, one man on the extremity of each pillar snapped off at different heights. The length of the cave is 120 feet, and from its extremity the view of the sea through the large arch at the entrance is very grand. The color of the columns is a sort of black, with a lurking gloom of purple therein. For solemnity and grandeur it far surpasses the finest cathedral. As we approached in the boat there was such a fine swell of the sea that the columns seemed rising immediately out of the waves; it is impossible to describe it. I find I must keep memorandums of the verses I send you, for I do not remember whether I have sent the following lines upon Staffa. I hope not; 't would be a horrid bore to you, especially after reading this dull specimen of description. For myself I hate descriptions. I would not send it if it were not mine:

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[1] *The World* translates this name into *Trolinkil*, and gives the lake as *Loch Nukgal*—two more blunders with which we need scarcely credit Keats. It will be seen that these copied passages are in the main identical with the Derrynaculen letter, at pages 198-203 of Volume III.

Incipit Poema Lyricum de Staffa Fracturis.

Not Aladdin magian
Ever such a work began; &c.[1]

I ought to make a large "?" here; but I had better take the opportunity of telling you I have got rid of my haunting sore throat, and conduct myself in a manner not to catch another.

You speak of Lord Byron and me. There is this great difference between us. He describes what he sees, I describe what I imagine. Mine is the hardest task. You see the immense difference. The *Edinburgh Review* are afraid to touch upon my poem. They do not know what to make of it. They do not like to condemn it, and they will not praise it for fear. They are as shy of it as I should be of wearing a Quaker's hat. The fact is they have no real taste. They dare not compromise their judgments on so puzzling a question. If on my next publication they should praise me, and so tug in Endymion, I will address [them ?] in a manner they will not at all relish. The cowardliness of the *Edinburgh* is more than the abuse of the *Quarterly*.

Monday [20 September 1819].—This day is a grand day for Winchester; they elect the mayor. It was indeed high time the place had some sort of excitement. There was nothing going on—all asleep. Not an old maid's sedan returning from a card party, and if any old women have got tipsy they have not exposed themselves in the street. The side streets here are excessively maiden-lady-like—the door-steps always fresh from the flannel; the knockers have a very staid, serious, nay, almost awful, quietness about them. I never saw so quiet a collection of lions' and rams' heads. The doors most part black, with a little brass handle just above the keyhole, so that you may easily shut yourself out of your own house—he! he! There is none of your lady Bellaston rapping and ringing here; no thundering Jupiter footmen; no opera-treble tattoes; but a modest lifting up of the knocker by a set of little wee old fingers that peep through the gray mittens, and a dying fall thereof. The great beauty of poetry is that it makes everything, every place, interesting.

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[1] For the poem see Volume II, pages 309-11. I presume this fragment ended the Scotch extracts copied at Winchester, and that the next paragraph belongs to the Winchester period itself, for, in the Derrynaculen letter to Tom, Keats confesses to a sore throat, inducing him "to stay a day or two at Oban."

The palatine Venice and the abbotine Winchester are equally interesting. Some time since I began a poem called "The Eve of St. Mark," quite in the spirit of town quietude. I think it will give you the sensation of walking about an old country town in a coolish evening. I know not yet whether I shall ever finish it. I will give it as far as I have gone—*ut tibi placeret!*[1]

I hope you will like this for all its carelessness. I must take an opportunity here to observe that though I am writing *to* you, I am all the while writing *at* your wife. This explanation will account for my speaking sometimes hoity-toity-ishly. Whereas if you were alone, I should sport a little more sober sadness. I am like a squinting gentleman who, saying soft things to one lady, ogles another; or what is as bad, in arguing with a person on his left hand, appeals with his eye to one on the right. His vision is elastic; he bends it to a certain object, but having a patent spring, it flies off. Writing has this disadvantage of speaking; one cannot write a wink, or a nod, or a grin, or a purse of the lips, or a smile. O law! one cannot put one's finger to one's nose, or yerk ye in the ribs, or lay hold of your button in writing. But in all the most lively and titterly parts of my letter you must imagine me, as the epic poets say, now here, now there, now with one foot pointed at the ceiling, now with another; now with my pen on my ear; now with my elbow in my mouth. O my friends, you lose the action, and attitude is everything, as Fuseli said when he took up his leg like a musket to shoot a sparrow just darting behind his shoulder. And yet, does not the word mum go for one's finger beside the nose? I hope it does. I have to make use of the word mum before I tell you that Severn has got a little baby—all his own, let us hope. He told Brown he had given up painting and had turned modeller. I hope sincerely 'tis not a party concern; that Mr. —— or * * * is [not?] the real Pinxit and Severn the poor sculpsit to this work of art. You know he has long studied in the Life Academy. Haydon—"yes," your wife will say, "here is a sum total account of Haydon again. I wonder your brother don't put a monthly bulletin in the Philadelphia papers about him. I won't hear—no—skip down to the bottom—aye, and there are some more of his verses; skip (lullaby-by) them too—"

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[1] Here, *fide The World*, follows *The Eve of St. Mark*, for which see Volume II, pages 320-5.

"No, let's go regularly through."

"I won't hear a word about Haydon—bless the child! how rioty she is!—there, go on, there!"

Now pray go on here, for I have a few words to say about Haydon. Before this chancery threat had cut off every legitimate supply of cash from me, I had a little at my disposal. Haydon being very much in want, I lent him £30 of it. Now in this see-saw game of life I got nearest to the ground, and this chancery business riveted me there so that I was sitting in that uneasy position where the seat slants so abominably. I applied to him for payment. He could not—that was no wonder; but goodman delver, where was the wonder then, why marry, in this—he did not seem to care much about it, and let me go without my money with almost nonchalance, when he ought to have sold his drawings to supply me. I shall perhaps still be acquainted with him; but for friendship, that is at an end. Brown has been my friend in this; he got him to sign a bond payable at three months. Haslam has assisted me with the return of part of the money you lent him. Leigh Hunt—"there," says your wife, "there's another of those dull folks; not a syllable about my friends; well, Hunt, what about Hunt, pray? you little thing! See how she bites my finger—my! is not this a tooth!" Well, when you have done with the tooth, read on. Not a syllable about your friends? Well, here are some syllables.[1] As far as I could smoke things on the Sunday before last, thus matters stood in Henrietta street. Henry was a greater blade than ever I remember to have seen him; he had on a very nice coat, a becoming waistcoat and buff trousers. I think his face has lost a little of the Spanish-brown, but no flesh. He carved some beef exactly to suit my appetite, as if I had been measured for it. As I stood looking out of the window with Charles after dinner, quizzing the passengers, at which, I am sorry to say; he is too apt, I observed that his young son-of-a-gun's whiskers had begun to curl and curl —little twists and twists; all down the sides of his face getting properly thickish on the angles of the visage. He certainly will have a notable pair of whiskers. "How shiny your gown is in front," says Charles. "Why, don't you see 'tis an apron," says Henry, whereupon I scrutinized, and behold your mother had a purple stuff gown on, and over it an apron of same color, being the same cloth that was used for the lining; and furthermore, to account for the shining, it was the first day of wearing. I guessed as much of the gown; but that is entre-nous. Charles likes England better than France. They have got as fat, smiling, fair a cook as ever you saw. She is a little lame, but that improves her; it makes her go more swimmingly. When I asked, "Is Mrs. Wylie within?" she gave such a large five-and-thirty-year-old smile it made me look round on the fourth stair—it might have been the fifth—but that's a puzzle I shall never be able, if I were to set myself a-recollecting for a year, to recollect that. I think I remember two or three specks in her teeth, but I really can't say exactly.

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[1] The correspondent of *The World* gives the passage from here to "can't say exactly" as an extract from "a letter to Mrs. George Keats," whereas it is obviously the passage omitted from the long letter to George Keats. The correspondent adds "Of course these extracts and the more complete letters of yesterday are not sent on account of any merit they possess; they are only of interest because John Keats wrote them."

If you would prefer a joke or two to anything else, I have two for you, fresh hatched, just as the bakers' wives say by the rolls. The first I played off at Brown; the second I played *on* myself. Brown when he left me,[1] "Keats," says he, "my good fellow (staggering on his left heel and fetching an irregular pirouette with his right). Keats!" says he (depressing his left eyebrow and elevating his right one—though, by the way, at the moment I did not know which was the right one), "Keats!" says he

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[1] To go "a visiting" to Bedhampton: see letter of the 22nd of September 1819 to Reynolds (Volume III, page 328).

(still in the same posture, but furthermore, both his hands in his waistcoat pockets and jutting out his stomach), "Keats—my—go-o-ood fell-o-o-o-ooh!" (interlarding his exclamation with certain ventriloquial parentheses), no, this is all a lie, he was as sober as a judge when a judge happens to be sober, and said, "Keats, if any letters come for me do not forward them, but open them and give me the marrow of them in a few words." At the time when I wrote my first to him no letters had arrived. I thought I would invent one, and as I had not time to manufacture a long one I dabbed off a short one, and that was the reason of the joke succeeding beyond my expectations. Brown let his house to a Mr. Benjamin, a Jew. Now, the water which furnishes the house is in a tank sided with a composition of lime, and the lime impregnates the water unpleasantly. Taking advantage of this circumstance, I pretended that Mr. Benjamin had written the following short note:

"Sir: By drinking your d——d water I have got the gravel. What reparation can you make to me and my family? Nathan Benjamin."

By a fortunate hit I hit upon his right heathen name—his right prenomen. Brown, in consequence, it appears, wrote to the surprised Mr. Benjamin the following:

"Sir: I cannot offer you any remuneration until your gravel shall have formed itself into a stone, when I will cut you with pleasure. C. Brown."

This of Brown Mr. Benjamin has answered, insisting on an explanation of this singular circumstance. B. says: "When I read your letter and his following I roared, and in came Mr. Snook, who, on reading them, seemed likely to burst the hoops of his fat sides." So the joke has told well. Now for the one I played on myself. I must first give you the scene and the *dramatis personæ*. There are an old Major and his young wife living in the next apartments to me. His bedroom door opens at an angle with my sitting-room door. Yesterday I was reading as demurely as a parish clerk when I heard a rap at the door. I got up and opened it; no one was to be seen. I listened and heard some one in the Major's room. Not content with this, I went up-stairs and down, looked in the cupboards and watched. At last I set myself to read again, not quite so demurely, when there came a louder rap. I determined to find out who it was. I looked out; the staircases were all silent. "This must be the Major's wife," said I; "at all events I will see the truth." So I raps me at the Major's door, and went in to the utter surprise and confusion of the lady, who was in reality there. After a little explanation, which I can no more describe than fly, I made my retreat from her convinced of my mistake. She is to all appearances a silly body, and is really surprised about it. She must have been, for I have discovered that a little girl in the house was the rappee. I assure you, she has nearly made me sneeze. If the lady tells tits, I shall put a very grave and moral face on the matter with the old gentleman, and make his little boy a present of a humming top.

The place I am speaking of puts me in mind of a circumstance which occurred lately at Dilke's. I think it very rich and dramatic, and quite illustrative of the little fun that he will enjoy sometimes. First I must tell you their house is at the corner of Great Smith street, so that some of the windows look into one street and the back windows into another round the corner. Dilke had some old people to dinner, I know not who; but there were two old ladies among them. Brown was there. They had known him from a child. Brown is very pleasant with old women, and on that day, it seems, behaved himself so winningly that they became hand-and-glove together and a little complimentary. Brown was obliged to depart early. He bid them good-by and pass'd into the passage. No sooner was his back turn'd than the old women began lauding him. When Brown had reached the street door and was just going, Dilke threw up the window and call'd, "Brown! Brown! they say you look younger than ever you did." Brown went on and had just turned the corner into the other street when Dilke appeared at the back window crying "Brown! Brown! By God, they say you're handsome!" You see what a many words it requires to give any identity to a thing I could have told you in half a minute.

I must tell you a good thing Reynolds *did*: 'twas the best thing he ever *said*. You know at taking leave of a party at a doorway, sometimes a man dallies and foolishes and gets awkward, and does not know how to make off to advantage. Good-by; well, good-by, and yet he does not go; good-by, and so on; well, god bless you. You know what I mean. Now, Reynolds was in this predicament, and got out of it in a very witty way. He was leaving us at Hampstead. He delayed and we were joking at him, and even said "be off," at which he put the tails of his coat between his legs and sneaked off as nigh like a Spaniel as could be. He went with flying colors: this is very clever. I must being on the subject, tell you another good thing of him. He began, for the service it might be of him in the law, to learn French. He had lessons at the cheap rate of 2 and 6 per fag, and observed to Brown, "Gad," says he, "the man sells his lessons so cheap he must have stolen 'em."

You have heard of Hook, the farce writer. Horace Smith said to one who asked him if he knew Hook, "O, yes! Hook and I are very intimate." There's a page of wit for you, to put John Bunyan's emblems out of countenance.

As for pun-making, I wish it were as good a trade as pin-making. There is very little business of that sort going on now. We struck for wages like the Manchester weavers, but to no purpose, so we are all out of employ. I am more lucky than some you see by having an opportunity of exporting a few—getting into a little foreign trade—which is a comfortable thing. I wish one could get change for a pun in silver currency. I would give three-and-a-half any night to get into Drury pit. But they won't ring at all. No more will notes, you will say; but notes are differing things, though they make together a pun-note, as the term goes.[1]

Tuesday [21 September 1819].—You see I keep adding a sheet daily till I send the packet off, which I shall not do for a few days, as I am inclined to write a good deal, for there can be nothing so remembrancing and enchaining as a good long letter, be it composed of what it may. From the time you left me our friends say I have altered completely, am not the same person; perhaps in this letter I am, for in a letter one takes up one's existence from the time we last met. I dare say you have altered also, every man does. Our bodies every seven years are completely fresh materialed; seven years ago it was not this hand that clenched itself against Hammond.[1] We are like the relic garments of a saint —the same, and not the same, for the careful monks patch it and patch it till there is not a thread of the original garment left, and still they show it for St. Anthony's shirt. This is the reason why men who had been bosom friends, on being separated for any number of years, afterwards meet coldly, neither of them knowing why. The fact is, they are both altered. Men who live together have a silent moulding and influencing power over each other. They inter-assimilate. 'Tis an uneasy thought that in seven years the same hands cannot greet each other again. All this may be obviated by a wilful and dramatic exercise of our minds towards each other. Some think I have lost that poetical ardor and fire 'tis said I once had. The fact is, perhaps I have; but instead of that I hope I shall substitute a more thoughtful and quiet power. I am more frequently now contented to read and think, but now and then haunted with ambitious thoughts. Quieter in my pulse, improved in my digestion, exerting myself against vexing speculations, scarcely content to write the best verse[s] for the fever they leave behind. I want to compose without this fever. I hope I one day shall. You could scarcely imagine I could live alone so comfortably—*Kepen in solitarinesse.*[2] I told Anne, the servant here, the other day, to say I was not at home if any one should call. I am not certain how I should endure loneliness and bad weather together. Now the time is beautiful. I take a walk every day an hour before dinner, and this is generally my walk. I go out at the back gate across one street into the Cathedral yard, which is always interesting. Then I pass under the trees along a paved path, pass the beautiful front of the Cathedral, turn to the left under a stone doorway; then I am on the other side of the building, which leaving behind me, I pass on through two college-like squares, seemingly built for the dwelling-place of Deans and Prebendaries, garnished with grass and shaded with trees. Then I pass through one of the old city gates, and then you are in one college street through which I pass, and at the end thereof crossing some meadows and at last a country alley of gardens. I arrive—that is, my worship arrives—at the foundation of Saint Cross, which is a very interesting old place, both for its Gothic tower and Alms square, and for the appropriation of its rich rents to a relation of the Bishop of Winchester. Then I pass across St. Cross meadows till you come to the most beautifully clear river. Now this is only one mile of my walk; I will spare you the other two till after supper, when they would do you more good. You must avoid going the first mile just after dinner. I could almost advise you to put by all this nonsense until you are lifted out of your difficulties; but when you come to this part, feel with confidence what I now feel, that though there can be no stop put to troubles we are inheritors of, there can be and must be an end to immediate difficulties. Rest in the confidence that I will not omit any exertion to benefit you by some means or other. If I cannot remit you hundreds I will tens, and if not that, ones. Let the next year be managed by you as well as possible—the next month, I mean, for I trust you will soon receive Abbey's remittance. What he can send you will not be a sufficient capital to ensure you any command in America. What he has of mine, I nearly have anticipated by debts. So I would advise you not to sink it, but to live upon it in hopes of my being able to increase it. To this end I will devote whatever I may gain for a few years to come, at which period I must begin to think of a security for my own comfort when quiet will become more pleasant to me than the world. Still I would have you doubt my success. 'Tis the cast of a die with me. You say "these things will be a great torment to me." I shall not suffer them to be so. I shall only exert myself the more, while the seriousness of their nature will prevent me from nursing up imaginary griefs. I have not had the blue devils once since I received your last. I am advised not to publish until it is seen whether the tragedy will or not succeed. Should it, a few months may see me in the way of acquiring property; should it not, it will be a drawback and I shall have to perform a longer literary pilgrimage. You will perceive that it is quite out of my interest to come to America. What could I do there? How could I employ myself? Out of the reach of libraries. I will not trust myself with brooding over this. The following is an extract of a letter from Reynolds to me: "I am glad to hear you are getting on so well with your writings. I hope you are not neglecting the revision of your poems for the press, from which I expect more than you do." The first thought that struck me on reading your last was to mortgage a poem to Murray; but on consideration I made up my mind not to do so. My reputation is very low; he would perhaps not have negotiated my bill of intellect, or given me a very small sum. I should have bound myself down for some time. 'Tis best to meet present misfortunes, not for a momentary good to sacrifice great benefits which one's own untrammelled and free industry may bring in the end. In all this do not think of me as in any way unhappy; I shall not be so. I have a great pleasure in thinking of my responsibility to you and shall do myself the greatest luxury if I can succeed in any way so as to be of assistance to you. We shall look back on these times, even before our eyes are at all dim; I am convinced of it. But be careful of those Americans. I cannot help thinking Mr. Audubon has deceived you. I shall not like the sight of him. I shall endeavor to avoid seeing him. You see how puzzled I am. I have no meridian to fix you to, being the slave of what is to happen.

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[1] The correspondent of *The World* separates this paragraph with the remark "Here is something on puns that John Keats wrote to his sister-in-law in reply to an inquiry as to whether he drove the trade with his accustomed ardor:" Lord Houghton gives the passage as a part of the letter to George Keats from which he has extracts; and I do not doubt that it belongs where I have placed it.

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[1] This phrase points to a serious rupture as the cause of his quitting his apprenticeship to Hammond. Lord Houghton, in originally giving the extract, printed—"Mine is not the same hand I clenched at Hammond." In the *Life and Letters* (1867) the words *at Hammond* give place to *at Hammond's.*

[2] These words from *The Eve of St. Mark* seem to have pleased their author specially: he quotes them in his letter to Reynolds of the 22nd of September 1819 also (Volume III, page 328).

In the course of a few months I shall be as good an Italian scholar as I am a French one. I am reading Ariosto at present, not managing more than six or eight stanzas at a time. When I have done this language so as to be able to read it tolerably well I shall set myself to get complete in Latin, and there my learning must stop. I do not think of venturing upon Greek. I would not go so far if I were not persuaded of the power the language gives me. The fact is, I like to be acquainted with foreign languages. It is besides a nice way of filling up intervals. Also the reading of Dante is well worth the while. And in Latin there is a fund of curious literature of the Middle Ages. The works of many great men—Aretino and Sannazaro and Machiavelli. I shall never become attached to a foreign idiom so as to put it into my writings. The "Paradise Lost," though so fine in itself, is a corruption of our language. It should be kept as it is, unique, a curiosity—a beautiful and grand curiosity, the most remarkable production of the world; a Northern dialect accommodating itself to Greek and Latin inversions and intonations. The purest English, I think—or what ought to be the purest—is Chatterton's. The language had existed long enough to be entirely incorrupted of Chaucer's Gallicisms, and still the old words are used. Chatterton's language is entirely Northern. I prefer the native music of it to Milton's, cut by feet. I have but lately stood on my guard against Milton. Life to him would be death to me. Miltonic verse cannot be written, but is the verse of art. I wish to devote myself to another verse alone.

[24 September 1819.] I have been obliged to intermit your letter for two days (this being Friday now) from having had to attend to other correspondence. Brown, who was at Bedhampton, went thence to Chichester, and I still directing my letters to Bedhampton, there was a misunderstanding about them. I began to suspect my letters had been stopped from curiosity. However, yesterday Brown had four letters from me all in a dump, and the matter is cleared up. Brown complained very much in his letter to me yesterday of the great alteration the disposition of Dilke has undergone. He thinks of nothing but "Political justice" and his boy. Now, the first political duty a man ought to have a mind to is the happiness of his friends. I wrote Brown a comment on the subject, wherein I explained what I thought of Dilke's character, which resolved itself into this conclusion: That Dilke is a man who cannot feel he has a personal identity unless he has made up his mind about everything. The only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing—to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts—not a select party. The genus is not scarce in population. All the stubborn arguers you meet with are of the same brood. They never begin on a subject they have not preresolved on. They want to hammer their nail into you and if you turn the points still they think you wrong. Dilke will never come at a truth as long as he lives, because he is always trying it. He is a Godwin Methodist. I must not forget to mention that your mother showed me the lock of hair. 'Tis of a very dark color for so young a creature. When it is two feet in length, I shall not stand a barleycorn higher. That's not fair; one ought to go on growing as well as others. At the end of this sheet I shall stop for the present and send it off. You may expect another letter immediately after it. As I never know the day of the month except by chance, I put here that this is the 24th September. I would wish you here to stop your ears, for I have a word or two to say to your wife. My dear sister, in the first place I must quarrel with you for sending me such a shabby piece of paper, though that is in some degree made up for by the beautiful impression of the seal. You should like to know what I was doing the 1st of May. Let me see; I cannot recollect. I have all the *Examiners* ready to send. They will be a great treat to you when they reach you. I shall pack them up when my business with Abbey[1] has come to a good conclusion and the remittance is on the road to you. I have dealt round your best wishes to our friends like a pack of cards, but being always given to cheat myself, I have turned up an ace. You see I am making game of you. I see you are not at all happy in that America. England, however, would not be over happy for us if you were here. Perhaps 'twould be better to be teased here than there. I must preach patience to you both. No step hasty or injurious to you must be taken. If I were your son I shouldn't mind you, though you rapped me with the scissors. But, law! I should be out of favor sin the little 'un be commed. You have made an uncle of me, you have, and I don't know what to make of myself. I suppose next there'll be a nevey. You say, in May last, write directly. I have not received your letter above ten days. The thought of your little girl puts me in mind of a thing I heard Mr. Lamb say. A child in arms was passing by his chair toward the mother in the nurse's arms. Lamb took hold of the long clothes, saying: "Where, God bless me, where does it leave off?"

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[1] Opposite Lord Houghton's variation of this passage Mr. Dilke notes—"The business for George mentioned P 19 [page 334 of Volume III] and this with Abbey, related I have no doubt to a settlement of Tom's property. To settle with Abbey was a difficult thing—and must have been particularly so while George was abroad. John I think got money for himself, as I have before mentioned, though only in part."

[27 September 1819.] My dear George, this (Monday) morning, the 27th, I have received your last, dated July 12.[1] You say you have not heard from England for three months. Then my letter from Shanklin, written, I think, at the end of June, has not yet reached you. You shall not have cause to think I neglect you. Do not fret yourself about the delay of money on account of my immediate opportunity being lost; for in a new country whoever has money must have opportunity of employing it in many ways. The report runs now more in favor of Kean stopping in England. If he should I have confident hopes of our tragedy. If he invokes the hot-blooded character of Ludolph—and he is the only actor that can do it—he will add to his own fame and improve my fortune. I will give you a half-dozen lines of it before I part as a specimen :

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[1] This would seem to be a slip of Keats's, unless by *last* he means *last to arrive*, because at the beginning of this letter he mentions one from George dated the 24th of July, previously received. Probably the later letter was sent from the Settlement by speedier means than the earlier one.

> Not as a swordsman would I pardon crave,
> But as a son : the bronzed Centurion,
> Long toiled in foreign wars, and whose high deeds
> Are shaded in a forest of tall spears
> Known only to his troop, hath greater plea
> Of favor with my sire than I can have.

Believe me, my dear brother and sister, your affectionate and anxious brother,

John Keats.

CXIV.

To CHARLES WENTWORTH DILKE.

Winchester,
Friday Oct. 1st [1819].

My dear Dilke,

For sundry reasons, which I will explain to you when I come to Town, I have to request you will do me a great favour as I must call it knowing how great a Bore it is. That your imagination may not have time to take too great an alarm I state immediately that I want you to hire me a couple of rooms (a Sitting Room and

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(CXIV) Lord Houghton, referring here to Keats and Brown, says—"The friends returned to town together, and Keats took possession of his new abode. But he had miscalculated his own powers of endurance: the enforced absence from his friends was too much for him, and a still stronger impulse drew him back again to Hampstead."

bed room for myself alone) in Westminster. Quietness and cheapness are the essentials: but as I shall with Brown be returned by next Friday you cannot in that space have sufficient time to make any choice selection, and need not be very particular as I can when on the spot suit myself at leisure. Brown bids me remind you not to send the Examiners after the third. Tell Mrs. D. I am obliged to her for the late ones which I see are directed in her hand. Excuse this mere business letter for I assure you I have not a syllable at hand on any subject in the world.

Your sincere friend,
John Keats.

CXV.

To BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON.

Winchester, Sunday Morn
[*Postmark*, 3 October 1819].

My dear Haydon,

Certainly I might: but a few Months pass away before we are aware. I have a great aversion to letter writing, which grows more and more upon me; and a greater to summon up circumstances before me of an unpleasant nature. I was not willing to trouble you with them. Could I have dated from my Palace of Milan you would have heard from me. Not even now

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(cxv) It will be observed that, while Keats's attitude towards the genius of Haydon shows no change in this letter, there is, when we compare it with former letters, a certain reserve of tone, quite corresponding with the altered personal attitude referred to in the letter to George Keats (page 21 of this volume).

will I mention a word of my affairs—only that "I Rab am here" but shall not be here more than a Week more, as I purpose to settle in Town and work my way with the rest. I hope I shall never be so silly as to injure my health and industry for the future by speaking, writing or fretting about my non-estate. I have no quarrel, I assure you, of so weighty a nature, with the world, on my own account as I have on yours. I have done nothing—except for the amusement of a few people who refine upon their feelings till any thing in the ununderstandable way will go down with them—people predisposed for sentiment. I have no cause to complain because I am certain any thing really fine will in these days be felt. I have no doubt that if I had written Othello I should have been cheered by as good a mob as Hunt.[1] So would you be now if the operation of painting was as universal as that of Writing. It is not: and therefore it did behove men I could mention among whom I must place Sir George Beaumont to have lifted you up above sordid cares. That this has not been done is a disgrace to the country. I know very little of Painting, yet your pictures follow me into the Country. When I am tired of reading I often think them over and as often condemn the spirit of modern Connoisseurs. Upon the whole, indeed, you have no complaint to make, being able to say what so few Men can, "I have succeeded." On sitting down to write a few lines to you these are the uppermost in my mind, and, however I may be beating about the arctic while your spirit has passed the line, you may lay to a minute and consider I am earnest as far as I can see. Though at this present "I have great dispositions to write" I feel every day more and more content to read. Books are becoming more interesting and valuable to me. I may say I could not live without them. If in the course of a fortnight you can procure me a ticket to the British Museum I will make a better use of it than I did in the first instance. I shall go on with patience in the confidence that if I ever do any thing worth remembering the Reviewers will no more be able to stumble-block me than the Royal Academy could you. They have the same quarrel with you that the Scotch nobles had with Wallace. The fame they have lost through you is no joke to them. Had it not been for you Fuseli would have been not as he is major but maximus domo. What Reviewers can put a hindrance to must be—a nothing—or mediocre which is worse. I am sorry to say that since I saw you I have been guilty of——a practical joke upon Brown which has had all the success of an innocent Wildfire among people.[1] Some day in the next week you shall hear it from me by word of Mouth. I have [not] seen the portentous Book which was skummer'd[2] at you just as I

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[1] Lord Houghton in giving an extract with variations from this letter omits the reference to Hunt—perhaps thinking of Leigh Hunt, and taking the words *cheered by as good a mob* as metaphorical; but the account of Henry Hunt's entry into London in the letter to George Keats (page 14) makes it clear that the reference is to the real mob who actually did cheer the hero of "Peterloo."

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[1] See the account of this at page 23.

[2] The middle of this word has been torn away with the seal of the letter; but I have no doubt it was the expressive provincialism restored in the text, used in much the same sense as in the lines from John Davies' *Commendatory Verses*,—

And for a monument to after-commers
Their picture shall continue (though Time scummers
Upon th' Effigie.

Mr. Frank Scott Haydon has identified the book for me,—*A Desul-*

left town. It may be light enough to serve you as a Cork Jacket and save you for awhile the trouble of swimming. I heard the Man went raking and rummaging about like any Richardson. That and the Memoirs of Menage are the first I shall be at. From Sr. G. B's, Lord Ms[1] and particularly Sr. John Leicesters good lord deliver us. I shall expect to see your Picture plumped out like a ripe Peach—you would not be very willing to give me a slice of it. I came to this place in the hopes of meeting with a Library but was disappointed. The High Street is as quiet as a Lamb. The knockers are dieted to three raps per diem. The walks about are interesting from the many old Buildings and archways. The view of the High Street through the Gate of the City in the beautiful September evening light has amused me frequently. The bad singing of the Cathedral I do not care to smoke—being by myself I am not very coy in my taste. At St. Cross[2] there is an

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tory Exposition of an Anti-British System of Incendiary Publication, &c. (London, 1819). The author, William Carey, appears to have been an art-critic, and to have criticized Haydon's Dentatus in *The Champion.* The book is described by Mr. F. S. Haydon as "an answer to certain statements in the *Annals of the Fine Arts*," containing "a very fair, though bitter, criticism of the tone of that remarkable periodical, and of the misstatements in it a thorough exposure."

[1] Sir George Beaumont and Lord Mulgrave. Perhaps Haydon had been recalling the rejection of the picture of Macbeth commissioned some ten years before—an affair concerning which he declared thirty-one years after its occurrence that he was "still suffering from its fatal effects." Lord Mulgrave and Sir John Leicester were both among Haydon's patrons; but I do not know what particular offence they had committed in Keats's eyes in 1819.

[2] Not *at Mr. Cross's*, as given in Lord Houghton's extract from this letter.

interesting picture of Albert Dürer's—who living in such warlike times perhaps was forced to paint in his Gauntlets—so we must make all allowances.

I am my dear Haydon
Yours ever
John Keats

Brown has a few words to say to you and will cross this.[1]

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[1] Brown's few words are as follows :—

My dear Sir,

I heard yesterday you had written to me at Hampstead. I have not recd. your letter. You must, I think, accuse me of neglect, but indeed I do not merit it. This many worded Keats has left me no room to say more.—I shall be in Town in a few days.—

Your's truly
Cha^s. Brown.

Between this and the next letter in the present series, the student will probably read the two to Fanny Brawne sent from College Street, Westminster, on the 11th and 13th of October 1819.

CXVI.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Wentworth Place
[*Postmark*, 16 October 1819.]

My dear Fanny,

My Conscience is always reproaching me for neglecting you for so long a time. I have been returned from Winchester this fortnight and as yet I have not seen you. I have no excuse to offer—I should have no excuse. I shall expect to see you the next time I call on Mr. A about George's affairs which perplex me a great deal—I should have to day gone to see if you were in town—but as I am in an industrious humour (which is so necessary to my livelihood for the future) I am loath to break through it though it be merely for one day, for when I am inclined I can do a great deal in a day—I am more fond of pleasure than study (many men have prefer'd the latter) but I have become resolved to know something which you will credit when I tell you I have left off animal food that my brains may never henceforth be in a greater mist than is theirs by nature—I took lodgings in Westminster for the purpose of being in the reach of Books, but am now returned to Hampstead being induced to it by the habit I have acquired in this room I am now in and also from the pleasure of being free from paying any petty attentions to a diminutive house-keeping. Mr. Brown has been my great friend for some time—without him I should have been in, perhaps, personal distress—as I know you love me though I do not deserve it, I am sure you will take pleasure in being a friend to Mr. Brown even before you know him.—My lodgings for two or three days were close in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Dilke who never sees me but she enquires after you—I have had letters from George lately which do not contain, as I think I told you in my last, the best news—I have hopes for the best—I trust in a good termination to his affairs which you please God will soon hear of—It is better you should not be teased with the particulars. The whole amount of the ill news is that his mercantile speculations have not had success in consequence of the general depression of trade in the whole province of Kentucky and indeed all America.—I have a couple of shells for you you will call pretty.

Your affectionate Brother
John —

CXVII.

To JOSEPH SEVERN.

6 Goswell Street Road,
Opposite Spencer Street.

Wentworth Place
Wednesday

Dear Severn,

Either your joke about staying at home is a very old one or I really call'd. I don't remember doing so. I am glad to hear you have finish'd the Picture and am

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(CXVI) The next letter in order of date is that of the 19th of October 1819 to Fanny Brawne.

(CXVII) The original letter bears no legible dated postmark; but it is inscribed "1819" in Severn's writing. If, as would seem to be likely, it relates to "The Cave of Despair," it probably belongs to the end of October 1819: see foot-note to Letter CXIX.

more anxious to see it than I have time to spare: for I have been so very lax, unemployed, unmeridian'd, and objectless these two months that I even grudge indulging[1] (and that is no great indulgence considering the Lecture is not over till 9 and the lecture room seven miles from Wentworth Place) myself by going to Hazlitt's Lecture. If you have hours to the amount of a brace of dozens to throw away you may sleep nine of them here in your little Crib and chat the rest. When your Picture is up and in a good light I shall make a point of meeting you at the Academy if you will let me know when. If you should be at the Lecture tomorrow evening I shall see you—and congratulate you heartily—Haslam I know "is very Beadle to an amorous sigh."[2]

Your sincere friend
John Keats.

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[1] In the original, *induldging.*

[2] Misquoted from a speech of Biron's in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Act III, Scene 1, lines 176-7)—

> And I, forsooth in love! I, that have been love's whip;
> A very beadle to a humorous sigh;

but it is not clear in what way Keats means to apply the words—whether in Biron's sense or the reverse,—probably the reverse, if Haslam was the person referred to as "H" and not "a pattern for lovers" in the Winchester letter to George Keats (page 7 of this volume).

CXVIII.

To Fanny Keats.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Pancras Lane,
Queen Street, Cheapside.

Wednesday Morn.
[*Postmark*, 17 November 1819.]

My dear Fanny,

I received your letter yesterday Evening and will obey it to morrow. I would come to day—but I have been to Town so frequently on George's Business it makes me wish to employ to day at Hampstead. So I say Thursday without fail. I have no news at all entertaining—and if I had I should not have time to tell them as I wish to send this by the morning Post.

Your affectionate Brother
John.

CXIX.

To JOHN TAYLOR.

Wentworth Place,
Hampstead, 17 November [1819].

My dear Taylor,

I have come to a determination not to publish anything I have now ready written: but, for all that, to publish a poem before long, and that I hope to make a fine one. As the marvellous is the most enticing, and the surest guarantee of harmonious numbers, I have been endeavouring to persuade myself to untether Fancy, and to let her manage for herself. I and myself cannot agree about this at all. Wonders are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst men and women. I would rather read Chaucer than Ariosto. The little dramatic skill I may as yet have, however badly it might show in a drama, would, I think, be sufficient for a poem. I wish to diffuse the colouring of St. Agnes' Eve throughout a poem in which character and sentiment would be the figures to such drapery. Two or three such poems, if God should spare me, written in the course of the next six years, would be a famous *Gradus ad Parnassum altissimum.* I mean they would nerve me up to the writing of a few fine plays—my greatest ambition, when I do feel ambitious. I am sorry to say that is very seldom. The subject we have once or twice talked of appears a promising one—the Earl of Leicester's history. I am this morning reading Holingshed's "Elizabeth." You had some books awhile ago, you promised to send me, illustrative of my subject. If you can lay hold of them, or any others which may be serviceable to me, I know you will encourage my low-spirited muse by sending them, or rather by letting me know where our errand-cart man shall call with my little box. I will endeavour to set myself selfishly at work on this poem that is to be.

Your sincere friend
John Keats

CXX.

To JOSEPH SEVERN.

Wentworth Place
Monday Morn.

My dear Severn,

I am very sorry that on Tuesday I have an appointment in the City of an undeferable nature; and Brown on the same day has some business at Guildhall. I have not been able to figure your manner of executing the Cave of despair, therefore it will be at any rate a novelty and surprise to me—I trust on the right side. I shall call upon you some morning shortly

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(CXX) This letter is given from a manuscript without date, address, or postmark; but I think there can be no doubt the proposed visit to the Academy was for the purpose of seeing Severn's "Cave of Despair" "hung up for the prize." If so, probably the Monday on which the letter was written was the 6th of December 1819; for among Severn's Keats relics was an outside leaf of a letter bearing a Hampstead postmark of that date, addressed by Keats to "Joseph Severn Esqre., 6 Goswell Street Road, Near Northampton Square," and probably belonging to this very letter. The pictures for the "Cave of Despair" competition were to be in the Academy by the 1st of November 1819; and some one from *The Literary Gazette* had seen them by the 10th of December, the day on which the premiums were to be distributed. The critic professes not to know the decision, but gives his voice in favour of "a Mr.

early enough to catch you before you can get out—when we will proceed to the Academy. I think you must be suited with a good painting light in your Bay window. I wish you to return the Compliment by going with me to see a Poem I have hung up for the Prize in the Lecture Room of the Surry Institution. I have many Rivals the most threatening are An Ode to Lord Castlereagh, and a new series of Hymns for the New, new Jerusalem Chapel. You had best put me into your Cave of despair.

Ever yours sincerely
John Keats

Severn, who has produced a very clever and unexaggerated picture." When the picture appeared at the Academy exhibition of the next year, there was the following note on it in *Annals of the Fine Arts*:—"This picture, it appears obtained the medal last year; and we are sorry that of all their students such as this should be the best. Their regulations drive the able from their schools, and humble mediocrity is all that is left them." In the Academy catalogue for 1820 the title of the picture (Number 398) is "Una and the Red Cross Knight in the Cave"; and an extract is given from *The Faerie Queene* (Book I, Canto IX, stanzas 48-52,—the passage in which Una seizes the dagger from the Red Cross Knight, and prevents his using it against himself.

CXXI.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Wentworth Place
Monday Morn—
[*Postmark*, 20 December 1819.]

My dear Fanny,

When I saw you last, you ask'd me whether you should see me again before Christmas. You would have seen me if I had been quite well. I have not, though not unwell enough to have prevented me—not indeed at all—but fearful le[s]t the weather should affect my throat which on exertion or cold continually threatens me.—By the advice of my Doctor I have had a warm great Coat made and have ordered some thick shoes—so furnish'd I shall be with you if it holds a little fine before Christmas day.—I have been very busy since I saw you, especially the last Week, and shall be for some time, in preparing some Poems to come out in the Spring, and also in brightening the interest of our Tragedy.—Of the Tragedy I can give you but news semigood. It is accepted at Drury Lane with a promise of coming out next season: as that will be too long a delay we have determined to get Elliston to bring it out this Season or to transfer it to Covent Garden. This Elliston will not like, as we have every motive to believe that Kean has perceived how suitable the principal Character will be for him. My hopes of success in the literary world are now better than ever. Mr. Abbey, on my calling on him lately, appeared anxious that I should apply myself to something else—He mentioned Tea Brokerage. I supposed he might perhaps mean to give me the Brokerage of his concern which might be executed with little trouble and a good profit; and therefore said I should have no objection to it, especially as at the same time it occur[r]ed to me that I might make over the business to George—I questioned him about it a few days after. His mind takes odd turns. When I became a Suitor he became coy. He did not seem so much inclined to serve me. He described what I should have to do in the progress of business. It will not suit me. I have given it up. I have not heard again from George, which rather disappoints me, as I wish to hear before I make any fresh remittance of his property. I received a note from Mrs. Dilke a few days ago inviting me to dine with her on Xmas day which I shall do. Mr. Brown and I go on in our old dog trot of Breakfast, dinner (not tea, for we have left that off), supper, Sleep, Confab, stirring the fire and reading. Whilst I was in the Country last Summer, Mrs. Bentley tells me, a woman in mourning call'd on me,—and talk'd something of an aunt of ours—I am so careless a fellow I did not enquire, but will particularly: On Tuesday I am going to hear some Schoolboys Speechify on breaking up day—I'll lay you a pocket pi[e]ce we shall have "My name is Norval." I have not yet look'd for the Letter you mention'd as it is mix'd up in a box full of papers—you must tell me, if you can recollect, the subject of it. This moment Bentley brought a Letter from George for me to deliver to Mrs. Wylie—I shall see her and it before I see you. The Direction was in his best hand written with a good Pen and sealed with a Tassi[e]'s Shakspeare such as I gave you—We judge of people's hearts by their Countenances; may we not judge of Letters in the same way?—if so, the Letter does not contain unpleasant news—Good or bad spirits have an effect on the handwriting. This direction is at least unnervous and healthy. Our Sister is also well, or George would have made strange work with Ks and Ws. The little Baby is well or he would have formed precious vowels and Consonants—He sent off the Letter in a hurry, or the mail bag was rather a warm berth, or he has worn out his Seal, for the Shakespeare's head is flattened a little. This is close muggy weather as they say at the Ale houses—

I am, ever, my dear Sister,
Yours affectionately
John Keats —

CXXII.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Pancras Lane,
Queen Street, Cheapside.

Wentworth Place,
Wednesday—
[*Postmark*, 22 December 1819.]

My dear Fanny,

I wrote to you a Letter directed Walthamstow the day before yesterday wherein I promised to see you before Christmas day. I am sorry to say I have been and continue rather unwell, and therefore shall not be able to promise certainly. I have not seen Mrs. Wylie's Letter. Excuse my dear Fanny this very shabby note.

Your affectionate Brother
John.

CXXIII.

To GEORGIANA AUGUSTA KEATS,

born Wylie.

Thursday, January 13, 1820.

My dear Sis.:

By the time that you receive this your troubles will be over. I wish you knew that they were half over; I mean that George is safe in England, and in good health. I fear I must be dull, having had no good-

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This brilliant letter written to Keats's brilliant sister-in-law in America has given rise to some controversy. The version here adopted, or the greater part of it, was published in the New York *World* of the 25th of June 1877, with the statement that it was written while George Keats was in England, on the same business that had disturbed Keats at Winchester. Lord Houghton mentions this visit as having been made "early in the winter"; and I presume George must have arrived some time between the "close muggy weather" of the third week in December 1819, mentioned at page 49, and Sunday the 9th of January 1820, when the two brothers dined at the Millers'. Lord Houghton gives a different version of a part of this letter, as written "soon after George's departure." The letter begins thus in the *Life, Letters* &c.—

My dear Sister,

By the time you receive this your troubles will be over, and George have returned to you.

Setting aside the *verbal* inconsistency between the two versions, the inconsistency as regards *fact*, which has been charged against them, is surely not real. Both versions alike indicate that Keats was writing with the knowledge that his letter would not reach Mrs. George Keats till after the return of her husband from his sudden and short visit to England; and, assuming the genuineness of the latter portion of this letter, which I have restored from *The Philobiblion* for August 1862, this was certainly the case. This portion seems to me, on internal evidence alone, of indubitable authenticity, although given side by side with a letter purporting to natured flip from fortune's finger since I saw you, and no side-way comfort in the success of my friends. * * * We smoke George about his little girl; he runs the common beaten road of every father, as, I dare say, you do of every mother. There is no child like his child—so original! original forsooth! However I take you at your words; I have a lively faith that yours is the very gem of all children. Ain't I its uncle? On

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be Shelley's, a flagrant forgery which has been publicly animadverted on several times lately, having been reprinted as genuine. If the Keats fragment is, as I believe, genuine, it belongs to the particular letter now under consideration. It is headed *Friday 27th*, and closes with the promise of "a close written sheet on the first of next month," varying in phrase, just as the *World* version of the whole letter varies, from Lord Houghton's. The correspondent of *The World* would seem (I only say *seem*—for the matter is obscure) to have used Lord Houghton's pages for "copy" where a cursory examination indicated that they gave the same matter as the original letter,—transcribing what presented itself as new matter from the original. The fragment of *Friday 27th* was, on this supposition, in its place when the copies were made for Lord Houghton, because there is the close; but between that time and 1862 it must have been separated from the letter, and got into the portfolio of the collector who contributed it to *The Philobiblion*. Keats explains, under the inaccurate and unexplicit date *Friday 27th*, that he has been writing a letter for George to take back to his wife, has unfortunately forgotten to bring it to town, and will have to send it on to Liverpool, whither George has departed that morning "by the coach," at six o'clock. The 27th of January 1820 was a Thursday, not a Friday; and there can be hardly any doubt that George Keats left London on the 28th of January 1820, because John, who professed to know nothing of the days of the month, seems generally to have known the days of the week; and this Friday cannot have been in any other month: it was after the 13th of January, and before the 16th of February, on which day Keats wrote to Rice, referring to his illness. As regards the "Scotchman to hate," Mr. Dilke writes, "This I think must have been a Mr. Webster who resided at Hampstead as a teacher and gave Wentworth lessons."

Henry's marriage there was a piece of bride's-cake sent me; it missed its way. I suppose the carrier or coachman was a conjuror, and wanted it for his own private use. Last Sunday George and I dined at Miller's. Your mother with Charles were there, and fool L——, who sent the sly, disinterested shawl to Miss Miller, with his own heathen name engraved in the middle of it. The evening before last we had a piano-forte dance at Mrs. Dilke's. There was little amusement in the room, but a Scotchman to hate. Some persons, you must have observed, have a most unpleasant effect upon you when speaking in profile. This Scot is the most accomplished fellow in this way I ever met with. The effect was complete; it went down like a dose of bitters, and I hope will improve my digestion. At Taylor's, too, there was a Scotchman, but he was not so bad, for he was as clean as he could get himself. George has introduced an American to us by the name of H——. I like him in a moderate way. I told him I hated Englishmen, as they were the only men I knew. He does not understand this. Who would be braggadocio to Johnny Bull? Johnny's house is his castle, and a precious dull castle it is. What a many Bull castles there are in so-and-so crescent. I never wish myself a general visitor and newsmonger, but when I write to you—I should then, for a day or two, like to have the knowledge of fool L——, for instance; of all the people of wide acquaintance to tell you about, only let me have his knowledge of family affairs and I would set them in a proper light; but, bless me, I never go any where. My pen is no more garrulous than my tongue. Any third person would think I was addressing myself to a lover of scandal, but I know you do not like scandal, but love fun; and if scandal happen to be fun, that is no fault of ours. The best thing I have heard is your shooting, for it seems you follow the gun. I like your brothers the more I see of them, but I dislike mankind in general. The more I know of men, the more I know how to value entire liberality in any of them. Thank God, there are a great many who will sacrifice their worldly interest for a friend; I wish there were more who would sacrifice their passions. The worst of men are those whose self-interests are their passions; the next those whose passions are their self-interest. Upon the whole I dislike mankind; whatever people on the other side of the question may advance, they cannot deny that we are always surprised at hearing of a good action and never of a bad one. I am glad you have doves in America. "Gertrude of Wyoming" and Birkbeck's book[1] should be bound together as a couple of decoy-ducks; one is almost as practical as the other. I have been sitting in the sun while I wrote this, until it has become quite oppressive; the Vulcan heat is the natural heat for January. Our Irish servant has very much piqued me this morning by saying her father is very much like my Shakespeare,[1] only he has more colour than the engraving. If you were in England, I dare say you would be able to pick out more amusement from society than I am able to do. To me it is all as dull as Louisville is to you. I am tired of theatres; almost all parties I chance to fall into I know by heart; I know the different styles of talk in different places; what subjects will be started, and how it will proceed, like an acted play, from the first to the last act. If I go to Hunt's, I run my head into many-times heard puns and music; to Haydon's, worn out discourses of poetry and painting; to the Miss R[eynolds]'s, I am afraid to speak for fear of some sickly reiteration of phrase or sentiment; at Dilke's I fall foul of politics. 'Tis best to remain aloof from people and like their good parts without being eternally troubled with the dull processes of their everyday lives. When once a person has smoked the vapidness of the routine of society, he must have either some self-interest or the love of some sort of distinction to keep him in good humor with it.

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[1] In the same number of *The Quarterly Review* which contained the notice of *Endymion* there had appeared an article of over twenty-four pages on Morris Birkbeck's *Notes on a Journey in America, from the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois.* Some of the concluding sentences certainly adopt the "decoy-duck" view of the book. On the last page of the article we read thus:—"On the whole, detesting, as we most cordially do, all the principles avowed by Mr. Birkbeck, moral and political, (religious, as we have seen, he has none,) we are ready to give him the credit of having written an entertaining little volume of 'Notes,' in which we are presented with an interesting and in some measure a faithful picture of the country through which he travelled, and the people with whom he had any intercourse. His 'Letters from Illinois' are of a different character: there is nothing in them that can excite the least degree of interest, except, perhaps, in those unfortunate persons whom he may succeed in seducing from the land of their fathers, in order to dispose of that property, which, with all its cheapness, is evidently a dead weight upon his hands. One word more, and we have done. Whatever 'New America' may have gained by the name of Birkbeck having ceased to be found in the list of the citizens of Old England, the latter has no reason to regret the loss. Many more of the same stamp may well be spared to wage

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war with the bears and red Indians of the 'back-woods' of America." The editor of *The Quarterly* might have been pleased to know that the author of *Endymion*, the friend of the detested Leigh Hunt, had a brother destined for that back-woods war, and even entertained the idea of joining in it himself.

[1] Probably this refers to the portrait given to him by his landlady at Carisbrooke in 1817 (see pages 52 and 63 of Volume III). But it may possibly be the portrait in the folio of 1808, a book which Keats possessed,—a print copied from that by Martin Droeshout in the folio of 1623.

All I can say is that standing at Charing Cross and looking east, west, north and south I see nothing but dullness. I hope while I am young to live retired in the country; when I grow in years and have a right to be idle I shall enjoy cities more.

I know three witty people, all distinct in their excellence—Rice, Reynolds and Richards.[1] Rice is the wisest, Reynolds the playfullest, Richards the out-of-the-wayest. The first makes you laugh and think; the second makes you laugh and not think; the third puzzles your head. I admire the first, I enjoy the second and I stare at the third. The first is claret, the second ginger-beer, the third is *crême de Byrapymdrag*. The first is inspired by Minerva, the second by Mercury and the third by Harlequin Epigram, esq. The first is neat in his dress, the second careless, the third uncomfortable. The first speaks adagio, the second allegretto and the third both together; the first is Swiftean, the second Tom Cribean,[2] the third Shandean. I know three people of no wit at all, each distinct in his excellence—A, B and C. A is the foolishest, B is the sulkiest and C is the negative; A makes you yawn, B makes you hate, and as for C, you never see him at all, though he were six feet high; I bear the first, I forbear the second, I am not certain that the third is; the first is gruel, the second ditch-water, and the third is spilt and ought to be wiped up; A is inspired by Jack of the Clock, B has been drilled by a Russian sergeant, C they say is not his mother's true child, but that she bought him of the man who cries "Young lambs to sell." There are very many pretty pickings for me in George's letters about the prairie settlements if I had had any taste to turn them to account in England.

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[1] I have not met with any documents enabling me to state positively who this Richards was, or with any one whose personal recollection would stand in the stead of documents. It will be remembered that Keats's first volume of Poems (1817) was printed by C. Richards; and there is an extant copy of the volume with an inscription, in Keats's writing, to his friend Thomas Richards. Whether he was related to C. Richards, I know not, or whether he was identical with Thomas Richards of the Storekeeper's Office of the Ordnance Department in the Tower and of 9 Providence (or Sydney) Place, who was executor to the will of Charles Armitage Brown and guardian to his son.

[2] People appear to have enjoyed in 1819 the sort of wit they found in Thomas Moore's *Tom Crib's Memorial to Congress, with a Preface, Notes, and an Appendix, by one of the Fancy* (1819). Even Crabb Robinson calls it "an amusing volume"; but he confesses with due decorum that he "would rather read than have written it," adding (*Diary*, third edition, Volume I, page 329)—"It is really surprising

Friday, 27th [28 January 1820]. I wish you would call me names: I deserve them so much. I have only written two sheets[1] for you, to carry by George, and those I forgot to bring to town and have therefore to forward them to Liverpool. George went this morning at 6 o'clock by the Liverpool coach. His being on his

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that a gentleman (for so Moore is in station and connections) should so descend as to exhibit the Prince Regent and the Emperor of Russia at a boxing match, under the names of Porpus and Long Sandy. The boxing cant language does not amuse me, even in Moore's gravely burlesque lines." The epithet *Tom Cribean* might be applied to Reynolds's clever *jeu d'esprit*, *The Fancy*; but it is curious to note how the objects with which these three wits are compared come out on the whole to the advantage of the other two as against Reynolds, the only one who has left any mark. It is a pity Keats has not recorded any sample of Richards's wit. Of Rice's we have one touch—that about the ham at page 311 of Volume III.

[1] The contributor to *The Philobiblion* in an introductory paragraph to this passage, speaks of the "first half of the sheet being lost." It seems, rather, that the whole passage was written upon a half sheet in which to enclose the two sheets already written and left at home.

journey to you prevents my regretting his short stay. I have no news of any sort to tell you. Henry is wife bound in Cambden Town; there is no getting him out. I am sorry he has not a prettier wife: indeed 'tis a shame: she is not half a wife. I think I could find some of her relations in Buffon, or Captⁿ Cook's voyages or the hie-*rogue*glyphics in Moor's Almanack, or upon a Chinese clock door, the shepherdesses on her own mantlepiece, or in a *cruel* sampler in which she may find herself worsted, or in a Dutch toy shop window, or one of the daughters in the ark,[1] or in any picture shop window. As I intend to retire into the country where there will be no sort of news, I shall not be able to write you very long letters. Besides I am afraid the postage comes to too much; which till now I have not been aware of.

People in military[2] bands are generally seriously occupied. None may or can laugh at their work but the Kettle Drum, Long Drum, Do. Triangle and Cymbals. Thinking you might want a rat catcher I put your mother's old quaker-colour'd cat into the top of your bonnet. She's wi' kitten, so you may expect to find a whole family. I hope the family will not grow too large for its lodging. I shall send you a close written sheet on the first of next month, but for fear of missing the Liverpool Post I must finish here. God bless you and your little girl.

Your affectionate Brother,
John Keats.

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[1] It would seem from this description that Mr. Henry Wylie was constant to his preference for the young lady described by Keats nearly a year before. See Volume III, page 278.

[2] In *The Philobiblion, milatary.*

CXXIV.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Pancras Lane,
Queen Street, Cheapside.

Wentworth Place
Sunday Morning.
[*Postmark*, 7 February 1820.]

My dear Sister,

I should not have sent those Letters without some notice if Mr. Brown had not persuaded me against it on account of an illness with which I was attack'd on Thursday. After that I was resolved not to write till I should be on the mending hand; thank God, I am now so. From imprudently leaving off my great coat in the thaw I caught cold which flew to my Lungs. Every remedy that has been applied has taken the desired effect, and I have nothing now to do but stay within doors for some

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Thursday the 3rd of February 1820 was the date upon which Keats was taken ill; and by Sunday the 6th he was writing this letter to his sister. Lord Houghton's account of the beginning of the attack is as follows:—"One night, about eleven o'clock, Keats returned home in a state of strange physical excitement—it might have appeared to those who did not know him, one of fierce intoxication. He told his friend he had been outside the stage-coach, had received a severe chill, was a little fevered, but added, 'I don't feel it now.' He was easily persuaded to go to bed, and as he leapt into the cold sheets, before his head was on the pillow, he slightly coughed and said, 'That is blood from my mouth; bring me the candle; let me see this blood.' He gazed steadfastly for some moments at the ruddy stain, and then looking in his friend's face with an expression of sudden calmness never to be forgotten, said, 'I know the colour of that blood,—it is arterial blood—I cannot be deceived in that colour; that drop is my death-warrant. I must die.'"

time. If I should be confined long I shall write to Mr. Abbey to ask permission for you to visit me. George has been running great chance of a similar attack, but I hope the sea air will be his Physician in case of illness—the air out at sea is always more temperate than on land —George mentioned, in his Letters to us, something of Mr. Abbey's regret concerning the silence kept up in his house. It is entirely the fault of his Manner. You must be careful always to wear warm cloathing not only in frost but in a Thaw.—I have no news to tell you. The half built houses opposite us stand just as they were and seem dying of old age before they are brought up. The grass looks very dingy, the Celery is all gone, and there is nothing to enliven one but a few Cabbage Sta[l]ks that seem fix'd on the supera[n]nuated List. Mrs. Dilke has been ill but is better. Several of my friends have been to see me. Mrs. Reynolds was here this morning and the two Mr. Wylie's. Brown has been very alert about me, though a little wheezy himself this weather. Every body is ill. Yesterday evening Mr. Davenport, a gentleman of Hampstead, sent me an invitation to supper, instead of his coming to see us, having so bad a cold he could not stir out—so you [see] 'tis the weather and I am among a thousand. Whenever you have an inflam[m]atory fever never mind about eating. The day on which I was getting ill I felt this fever to a great height, and therefore almost entirely abstained from food the whole day. I have no doubt experienc'd a benefit from so doing—The Papers I see are full of anecdotes of the late King[1]: how he nodded to a Coalheaver and laugh'd with a Quaker and lik'd boiled Leg of Mutton. Old Peter Pindar is just dead: what will the old King and he say to each other? Perhaps the King may confess that Peter was in the right, and Peter maintain himself to have been wrong. You shall hear from me again on Tuesday.

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[1] George III. died on the 29th of January 1820. Dr. Wolcot had, I believe, died over a year before that date,—according to Chambers's Encyclopædia on the 14th of January 1819.

Your affectionate Brother
John.

CXXV.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Pancras Lane,
Queen Street, Cheapside.

Wentworth Place,
Tuesday morn [8 February 1820].
[*Postmark*, 9 February 1820.]

My dear Fanny—

I had a slight return of fever last night, which terminated favourably, and I am now tolerably well, though weak from [the] small quantity of food to which I am obliged to confine myself: I am sure a mouse would starve upon it. Mrs. Wylie came yesterday. I have a very pleasant room for a sick person. A Sopha bed is made up for me in the front Parlour which looks on to the grass plot as you remember Mrs. Dilke's does. How much more comfortable than a dull room up stairs, where one gets tired of the pattern of the bed curtains. Besides I see all that passes—for instance now, this morning—if I had been in my own room I should not have seen the coals brought in. On sunday between the hours of twelve and one I descried a Pot boy. I conjectured it might be the one o'Clock beer—Old women with bobbins and red cloaks and unpresuming bonnets I see creeping about the heath. Gipseys after hare skins and silver spoons. Then goes by a fellow with a wooden clock under his arm that strikes a hundred and more. Then comes the old French emigrant (who has been very well to do in France) with his hands joined behind on his hips, and his face full of political schemes. Then passes Mr. David Lewis, a very good-natured, goodlooking old gentleman who has[1] been very kind to Tom and George and me. As for those fellows the Brickmakers they are always passing to and fro. I mus'n't forget the two old maiden Ladies in Well Walk who have a Lap dog between them that they are very anxious about. It is a corpulent Little beast whom it is necessary to coax along with an ivory-tipp'd cane. Carlo our Neighbour Mrs. Brawne's dog and it meet sometimes. Lappy thinks Carlo a devil of a fellow and so do his Mistresses. Well they may—he would sweep 'em all down at a run; all for the Joke of it. I shall desire him to peruse the fable of the Boys and the frogs: though he prefers the tongues and the Bones. You shall hear from me again the day after tomorrow—

Your affectionate Brother
John Keats

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[1] In the manuscript, *whas has.*

CXXVI.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Pancras Lane,
Queen Street, Cheapside.

Wentworth Place
[*Postmark*, 11 February 1820.[1]]

My dear Fanny,

I am much the same as when I last wrote. I hope a little more verging towards improvement. Yesterday morning being very fine, I took a walk for a quarter of an hour in the garden and was very much refresh'd by it. You must consider no news, good news—if you do not hear from me the day after tomorrow—

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[1] On the same day Brown wrote to "Master Henry Snook, at Mr. Lord's Academy, Tooting, Surrey," a letter from which the following passage is extracted as having a certain value in connexion with Keats's story :—" Mr. Keats fell very ill yesterday week, and my office of head Nurse has too much employed me to allow of my answering your letter immediately; he is somewhat better, but I'm in a very anxious state about him.—I was in hopes of you and Jack being able, during Easter, to go to the Theatre to witness our Tragedy ; but no,—at Drury Lane they engaged to play it *next* Season, and I, not liking the delay, took it home.—Here, to amuse myself, I began to copy some of my favorite Hogarth's heads ; they were in Indian ink as usual; when Mr. Severn (I think you know him) put me on another plan, and I hope to succeed. I must tell you about Mr. Severn, whether you know him or not : he is a young Artist, who lately strove with his fellow students for a gold medal, which the Royal Academy gives annually for the best historical painting ; the subject was fixed to be the Cave of Despair as described in Spencer's poem ; it was Mr. Severn's *second* attempt in *oil* colours, and therefore it might have been supposed he stood no chance of success, and yet he won it !—it has been so much approved of that he will have his expenses paid for three years during his travels on the Continent, and his Majesty is to furnish him with letters of recommendation. What think you of this ? I tell it you as a proof there is still some good reward in the world for superior talent ; now and then a man of talent is disregarded, but

Your affectionate Brother
John

CXXVII.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Pancras Lane,
Queen Street, Cheapside.

Wentworth Place.
Monday Morn—
[*Postmark*, 14 February 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

I am improving but very gradually and suspect it will be a long while before I shall be able to walk six miles—The Sun appears half inclined to shine; if he obliges us I shall take a turn in the garden this morning. No one from Town has visited me since my last. I have had so many presents of jam and jellies that they would reach side by side the length of the sideboard. I hope I shall be well before it is all consumed. I am vex'd that Mr. Abbey will not allow you pocket money sufficient. He has not behaved well—By detaining money from me and George when we most wanted it he has increased our expences. In consequence of such delay George was obliged to take his voyage to England which will be £150

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it is an error to believe that such is the common fate of true desert. This does not apply solely to genius in the arts, but to you and me and all of us, as to our general character and capability."

out of his pocket. I enclose you a note—You shall hear from me again the day after tomorrow.

Your affectionate Brother
John

CXXVIII.

To JAMES RICE.

Wentworth Place,
16 February 1820.

My dear Rice,

I have not been well enough to make any tolerable rejoinder to your kind letter. I will, as you advise, be very chary of my health and spirits. I am sorry to hear of your relapse and hypochondriac symptoms attending it. Let us hope for the best, as you say. I shall follow your example in looking to the future good rather than brooding upon the present ill. I have not been so worn with lengthened illnesses as you have, therefore cannot answer you on your own ground with respect to those haunting and deformed thoughts and feelings you speak of. When I have been, or supposed myself in health, I have had my share of them, especially within the last year. I may say, that for six months before I was taken ill I had not passed a tranquil day. Either that gloom overspread me, or I was suffering under some passionate feeling, or if I turned to versify, that acerbated the poison of either sensation. The beauties of nature had lost their power over me. How astonishingly (here I must premise that illness, as far as I can judge in so short a time, has relieved my mind of a load of deceptive thoughts and images, and makes me perceive things in a truer light), —how astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties upon us! Like poor Falstaff, though I do not "babble," I think of green fields; I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy—their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy. It is because they are connected with the most thoughtless and the happiest moments of our lives. I have seen foreign flowers in hothouses, of the most beautiful nature, but I do not care a straw for them. The simple flowers of our Spring are what I want to see again.

Brown has left the inventive and taken to the imitative art. He is doing his forte, which is copying Hogarth's heads. He has just made a purchase of the Methodist Meeting picture, which gave me a horrid dream a few nights ago. I hope I shall sit under the trees with you again in some such place as the Isle of Wight. I do not mind a game of cards in a saw-pit or waggon, but if ever you catch me on a stage-coach[1] in the winter full against the wind, bring me down with a brace of bullets, and I promise not to 'peach. Remember me to Reynolds, and say how much I should like to hear from him; that Brown returned immediately after he went on Sunday, and that I was vexed at forgetting to ask him to lunch; for as he went towards the gate, I saw he was fatigued and hungry.

I am, my dear Rice,
Ever most sincerely yours,
John Keats.

I have broken this open to let you know I was surprised at seeing it on the table this morning, thinking it had gone long ago.

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[1] See note at page 58.

CXXIX.

To Fanny Keats.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Pancras Lane,
Queen Street, Cheapside.

[*Postmark*, 19 February 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

Being confined almost entirely to vegetable food and the weather being at the same time so much against me, I cannot say I have much improved since I wrote last. The Doctor tells me there are no dangerous Symptoms about me and quietness of mind and fine weather will restore me. Mind my advice to be very careful to wear warm cloathing in a thaw. I will write again on Tuesday when I hope to send you good news.

Your affectionate Brother
John —

This brotherly insistence on prudence in the matter of dress is quite in character with the tender considerateness of the whole series of letters to his sister. At page 69 this subject is resumed.

CXXX.

To JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS.

[*Postmark*, 23 or 25 February 1820.]

My dear Reynolds,

I have been improving since you saw me: my nights are better which I think is a very encouraging thing. You mention your cold in rather too slighting a manner—if you travel outside have some flannel against the wind—which I hope will not keep on at this rate when you are in the Packet boat. Should it rain do not stop upon deck though the Passengers should vomit themselves inside out. Keep under Hatches from all sort of wet. I am pretty well provided with Books at present, when you return I may give you a commission or two. Mr. B. C. has sent me not only his Sicilian Story but yesterday his Dramatic Scenes—this is very polite and I shall do what I can to make him sensible I think so. I confess they teaze me—they are composed of amiability, the Seasons, the Leaves, the Moon &c. upon which he rings (according to Hunt's expression) triple bob majors. However that is nothing—I think he likes poetry for its own sake, not his.[1] I hope

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[1] Keats wrote of this attention of Procter's both to Fanny Brawne and to Dilke; but he seems to have reserved for his intimate kindred spirit Reynolds his estimate of the merits of Procter's books, while sharing between Reynolds and others his appreciation of the author's politeness. The *Dramatic Scenes* compose the second division of the volume of which *Marcian Colonna* forms the first; and this volume is the one referred to in the letter to Dilke (page 70) as Procter's "first publish'd book." It is fortunate that Keats's opinion of these books has come to the surface after lying hidden till now. It will be remembered that the books of this writer

I shall soon be well enough to proceed with my fa[e]ries and set you about the notes on Sundays and Stray-days. If I had been well enough I should have liked to cross the water with you. Brown wishes you a pleasant voyage—Have fish for dinner at the sea ports, and don't forget a bottle of Claret. You will not meet with so much to hate at Brussels as at Paris. Remember me to all my friends. If I were well enough I would paraphrase an ode of Horace's for you, on your embarking in the seventy years ago style. The Packet will bear a comparison with a Roman galley at any rate.

Ever yours affectionately

J. Keats

"teazed" Shelley even more than Keats, or at all events to more violent result. "The man", he writes to Peacock (Prose Works, Volume IV, pages 194-7), "whose critical gall is not stirred up by such ottava rimas as Barry Cornwall's, may safely be conjectured to possess no gall at all. The world is pale with the sickness of such stuff...I had much rather, for my own private reading, receive political, geological, and moral treatises than this stuff in *terza, ottava*, and *tremillissima rima* whose earthly baseness has attracted the lightning of your undiscriminating censure upon the temple of immortal song. Procter's verses enrage me far more than those of Codrus did Juvenal, and with better reason. Juvenal need not have been stunned unless he had liked it; but my boxes are packed with this trash to the exclusion of what I want to see." I do not know whether the excellent expression *triple bob majors* is still retained in the vocabulary of chime ringing. Keats's reference to his "faeries" is of course to *The Cap and Bells*.

CXXXI.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Wentworth Place, Thursday [24 February 1820].
[*Postmark*, 25 February 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

I am sorry to hear you have been so unwell: now you are better, keep so. Remember to be very careful of your cloathing—this climate requires the utmost care. There has been very little alteration in me lately. I am much the same as when I wrote last. When I am well enough to return to my old diet I shall get stronger. If my recovery should be delay'd long I will ask Mr. Abbey to let you visit me—keep up your Spirits as well as you can. You shall hear soon again from me—

Your affectionate Brother
John —

CXXXII.

To CHARLES WENTWORTH DILKE.

[*Postmark*, Hampstead, 4 March 1820.]

My dear Dilke,

Since I saw you I have been gradually, too gradually perhaps, improving; and though under an interdict with respect to animal food, living upon pseudo victuals, Brown says I have pick'd up a little flesh lately. If I can keep off inflammation for the next six weeks I trust I shall do very well. You certainly should have been at Martin's dinner for making an index is surely as dull work as engraving. Have you heard that the Bookseller is going to tie himself to the manger eat or not as he pleases. He says Rice shall have his foot on the fender notwithstanding. Reynolds is going to sail on the salt seas. Brown has been mightily progressing with his Hogarth.[1] A damn'd melancholy picture it is, and during the first week of my illness it gave me a psalm singing nightmare, that made me almost faint away in my sleep. I know I am better, for I can bear the Picture. I have experienced a specimen of great politeness from Mr. Barry Cornwall. He has sent me his books. Some time ago he had given his first publish'd book to Hunt for me; Hunt forgot to give it and Barry Cornwall thinking I had received it must have though[t] me [a] very

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Compare the opening of this letter with Number XXIX in the series to Fanny Brawne.

[1] See the letter to Rice of the 16th of February 1820 (page 65) and the note to the letter of the 11th of February to Fanny Keats (page 62), from which it appears the picture was not an original effort but a copy from a print.

neglectful fellow. Notwithstanding he sent me his second book and on my explaining that I had not received his first he sent me that also.[1] I am sorry to see by Mrs. D's note that she has been so unwell with the spasms. Does she continue the Medicines that benefited her so much? I am afraid not. Remember me to her and say I shall not expect her at Hampstead next week unless the Weather changes for the warmer. It is better to run no chance of a supernumer[ar]y cold in March. As for you you must come. You must improve in your penmanship; your writing is like the speaking of a child of three years old, very understandable to its father but to no one else. The worst is it looks well—no that is not the worst—the worst is, it is worse than Bailey's. Bailey's looks illegible and may perchance be read; yours looks very legible and may perchance not be read. I would endeavour to give you a fac-simile of your word Thistlewood if I were not minded on the instant that Lord Chesterfield has done some such thing to his son. Now I would not bathe in the same River with Lord C. though I had the upper hand of the stream. I am grieved that in writing and speaking it is necessary to make use of the same particles as he did. Cobbet[t] is expected to come in. O that I had two double plumpers for him. The ministry are not so inimical to him but {it ~~they~~} would like to put him out of Coventry. Casting my eye on the other side I see a long word written in a most vile manner,[1] unbecoming a Critic. You must recollect I have served no apprenticeship to old plays. If the only copies of the Greek and Latin authors had been made by you, Bailey and Haydon they were as good as lost. It has been said that the Character of a Man may be known by his handwriting—if the Character of the age may be known by the average goodness of said, what a slovenly age we live in. Look at Queen Elizabeth's Latin exercises and blush. Look at Milton's hand. I can't say a word for Shakespeare's.

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[1] The following appears to be the letter sent by Procter on this occasion: the date according to Letter CXXX would be the 22nd or 24th of February 1820. It appeared in the Memoir of Mr. Dilke in *The Papers of a Critic*:

Friday.
25, Store Street, Bedford Square.

My Dear Sir,

I send you "Marcian Colonna," which think as well of as you can. There is, I think (at least in the second and third parts), a stronger infusion of poetry in it than in the Sicilian story, but I may be mistaken. I am looking forward with some impatience to the publication of your book. Will you write my name in an early copy, and send it to me? * Is not this a "prodigious bold request?" I hope that you are getting quite well.

Believe me very sincerely yours,
B. W. Procter.

* This was written before I saw you the other day. Some time ago I scribbled half a dozen lines, under the idea of continuing and completing a poem, to be called "The Deluge,"—what do you think of the subject? The Greek deluge, I mean. I wish you would set me the example of leaving off the word "Sir."

To John Keats, Esq.

Your sincere friend
John Keats

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[1] Doubtless the word *supernumerary*, from which Keats had dropped the penultimate *ar*. The next sentence has reference, I presume, to Mr. Dilke's continuation of Dodsley's Collection of Old Plays.

CXXXIII.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

[*Postmark*, 20 March 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

According to your desire I write to day. It must be but a few lines for I have been attack'd several times with a palpitation at the heart and the Doctor says I must not make the slightest exertion. I am much the same to day as I have been for a week past. They say 'tis nothing but debility and will entirely cease on my

---

The following letter to Brown's young friend Henry Snook reports upon Keats four days later than the date of this letter to his sister; and beside its interest from this point of view, and the doggerel verses which it preserves, Brown's letter has a certain amiable charm of its own :—

Hampstead. 24th March 1820.

My dear Harry,

Your absence and Jack's will be much felt at Easter, but I would rather you should cheer your mother in her sickness, than contribute to my pleasure, and I know you are of the same mind. I sincerely hope you will find her better, and that you will leave her quite well. Write to me how she is. Every body is ill, or has been. I am rejoiced to learn that your Grandfather is well at last. Your Aunt has not quite recovered her strength. I have been nurse, night and day, to Mr. Keats for 7 weeks,—no,—only 12 nights. He will get well by degrees. This Nurseship of mine prevented my writing to you, or indeed to any one else, for tho' *I* had time enough, *he* could not endure to see me sit down to pen and ink, even now he has begun to feel quite nervous at the sight of this scrawl going on. The consequence was, I was compelled to betake myself to some other occupation, and as a man can't read from morning till bed-time, I have employed myself in drawing,—besides, too much reading before him was forbidden,—it is well I could do something inoffensive!

recovery of my strength which is the object of my present diet. As the Doctor will not suffer me to write I shall ask Mr. Brown to let you hear news of me for the future if I should not get stronger soon. I hope I shall be well enough to come and see your flowers in bloom—

Ever your most
affectionate Brother
John—

You shall have one of his bits of comic verses,—I met with them only yesterday, but they have been written long ago,—it is a song on the City of Oxford.—

Remembrance to Jack.

Your sincere friend
Cha^s. Brown.

ON OXFORD.

1

The Gothic looks solemn,
The plain Doric column
Supports an old Bishop and Crosier;
The mouldering arch,
Shaded o'er by a larch
Stands next door to Wilson the Hosier.

2

Vicè—that is, by turns,—
O'er pale faces mourns
The black tassell'd trencher and common hat;
The Chantry boy sings,
The Steeple-bell rings,
And as for the Chancellor—*dominat.*

3

There are plenty of trees,
And plenty of ease,
And plenty of fat deer for Parsons;
And when it is venison,
Short is the benison,—
Then each on a leg or thigh fastens.

CXXXIV.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Wentworth Place
April 1st. [1820.]

My dear Fanny—

I am getting better every day and should think myself quite well were I not reminded every now and then by faintness and a tightness in the Chest. Send your Spaniel over to Hampstead for I think I know where to find a Master or Mistress for him. You may depend upon it if you were even to turn it loose in the common road it would soon find an owner. If I keep improving as I have done I shall be able to come over to you in the course of a few weeks. I should take the advantage of your being in Town but I cannot bear the City though I have already ventured as far as the west end for the purpose of seeing Mr. Haydon's Picture which is just finished and has m[ade it]s appearance.[1] I have not heard from George yet since he left Liverpool. Mr. Brown wrote to him as from me the other day—Mr. B. wrote two Letters to Mr. Abbey concerning me—Mr. A. took no notice and of course Mr. B. must give up such a correspondence when as the man said all the Letters are on one side. I write with greater ease than I had thought, therefore you shall soon hear from me again.

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[1] I suppose this refers to the private view of the picture of Christ's Entry into Jerusalem. The picture was exhibited at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly; and the private view was on Saturday the 25th of March 1820. In Haydon's account of the triumphs of that day (*Autobiography*, first edition of Taylor's *Life*, Volume I, page 371), he says—"The room was full. Keats and Hazlitt were up in a corner, really rejoicing."

Your affectionate Brother
John —

CXXXV.

To FANNY KEATS.

[April 1820.]

My dear Fanny

Mr. Brown is waiting for me to take a walk. Mr[s]. Dilke is on a visit next door and desires her love to you. The Dog shall be taken care of and for his name I shall go and look in the parish register where he was born—I still continue on the mending hand.

Your affectionate Brother
John —

(CXXXV) Although this letter has neither date nor postmark, being addressed simply "Miss Keats", there is little doubt that it was written between the 1st and 12th of April 1820, and was intended as an acknowledgment of the due receipt of "the dog"—probably to go back to Walthamstow by the person who brought the dog. On the 1st Keats wrote to his sister to send her spaniel to Hampstead, and on the 12th that it was "being attended to like a Prince."

CXXXVI.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Wentworth Place
12 April [1820].

My dear Fanny—

Excuse these shabby scraps of paper I send you—and also from endeavouring to give you any consolation just at present, for though my health is tolerably well I am too nervous to enter into any discussion in

---

It was probably in reference to a letter of Brown's written about this time to George Keats that the following letter was sent:—

Louisville June 18th 1820

My dear John

Where will our miseries end? so soon as the Thursday after I left London you were attacked with a dangerous illness, an hour after I left this for England my little Girl became so ill as to approach the Grave dragging our dear George after her. You are recovered (thank [God?] I hear the bad and good news together) they are recovered, and yet I feel gloomy instead of grateful. Perhaps from the consideration that so short a time will serve to deprive me of every object that makes life pleasant. Brown says you are really recovered, that you eat, drink, sleep, and walk five miles without uneasiness, this is positive, and I believe you nearly recovered but your perfect recovery depends on the future. You must go to a more favorable clime, must be easy in your mind, the former depends on me the latter on yourself. My prospect of being able to send you 200£ very soon is pretty good, I have an offer for the Boat which I have accepted, but the party who lives at Natchez (near New Orleans 300 miles only) will not receive information that I have accepted his offer for some weeks since the Gentleman who was commissioned to make it has gone up the Country and not yet returned, the only chance against us is that the purchasing party may change his mind; this is improbable since he has already which my heart is concerned. Wait patiently and take care of your health, being especially careful to keep yourself from low spirits which are great enemies to health. You are young and have only need of a little patience. I am not yet able to bear the fatigue of coming to Walthamstow though I have been to Town once or twice. I have thought of taking a change of air.

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purchased one fifth and to my knowledge is very anxious to obtain mine, but it is not impossible. I will direct my Agent at New Orleans to send you 200£ instantly on receiving the proceeds of the sale and should no unexpected delay occur it will arrive within 2 or 3 weeks of this letter. It shall be addressed to you at Abbey & Co's, the first of exchange directly from New Orleans, the second and third by way of New York and this place. I have no other means of raising anything like that Sum, scarcely a man in the town could borrow such a sum. I might suggest means of raising the money on this hope immediately but Brown being on the spot will advise what is best. Since your health requires it to Italy you must and shall go. Make your mind easy and place confidence in my success, I cannot ensure it, but will deserve it. I have a consignment of goods to sell by commission, which helps me a little, if this parcel does well I shall have more. When I have received the price offered for the Boat I shall have been no loser by the purchase. This considering the alteration in times is doing wonders. George desires her love and thinks that if you were with us our nursing would soon bring you to rights, but I tell her you cannot be in better hands than Brown's, she joins me in grateful thanks to him. I will write to him next post, repeating what is important in this, lest one should miscarry. Our love to Fanny and Mrs. W. and Brothers. Yesterday's Post, with Brown's letter brought us one from Henry Wylie acquainting us with the death of Mrs. Miller. Our love to Mary Miller if you should see her, George will write her in a few days. I will write again soon. I made up a packet to Haslam containing letters to Fanny, Mr. Abbey and Mrs. W: to go by private hand, the Gentleman has postponed his voyage. Take the utmost care of yourself my dear John for the sake of your most affectionate and alarmed Brother and Sister.

I am
Your very affectionate Brother
George.

You shall hear from me immediately on my moving any where. I will ask Mrs. Dilke to pay you a visit if the weather holds fine, the first time I see her. The Dog is being attended to like a Prince.

Your affectionate Brother
John

CXXXVII.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

[*Postmark*, Hampstead, 21 April 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

I have been slowly improving since I wrote last. The Doctor assures me that there is nothing the matter with me except nervous irritability and a general weakness of the whole system which has proceeded from my anxiety of mind of late years and the too great excitement of poetry. Mr. Brown is going to Scotland by the Smack, and I am advised for change of exercise and air to accompany him and give myself the chance of benefit from a Voyage. Mr. H. Wylie call'd on me yesterday with a letter from George to his mother: George is safe at the other side of the water, perhaps by this time arrived at his home. I wish you were coming to town that I might see you; if you should be coming write to me, as it is quite a trouble to get by the coaches to Walthamstow. Should you not come to Town I must see you before I sail, at Walthamstow. They tell me I must study lines and tangents and squares and angles[1] to put a little Ballast into my mind. We shall be going in a fortnight and therefore you will see me within that space. I expected sooner, but I have not been able to venture to walk across the country. Now the fine Weather is come you will not find [1] your time so irksome. You must be sensible how much I regret not being able to alleviate the unpleasantness of your situation, but trust my dear Fanny that better times are in wait for you.

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[1] In the original letter, *ancles* is inadvertently written for *angles.*

Your affectionate Brother
John —

CXXXVIII.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Wentworth Place
Thursday—
[*Postmark*, 4 May 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

I went for the first time into the City the day before yesterday, for before I was very disinclined to encounter the scuffle, more from nervousness than real illness; which notwithstanding I should not have suffered to conquer me if I had not made up my mind not to go to Scotland, but to remove to Kentish Town till Mr. Brown returns. Kentish Town is a mile nearer to you than Hampstead—I have been getting gradually better but am not so well as to trust myself to the casualties of rain and sleeping out which I am liable to in visiting you. Mr. Brown goes on Saturday, and by that time I shall have settled in my new lodging, when I will certainly venture to you. You will forgive me I hope when I confess that I endeavour to think of you as little as possible and to let George dwell upon my mind but slightly. The reason being that I am afraid to ruminate on any thing which has the shade of difficulty or melancholy in it, as that sort of cogitation is so pernicious to health, and it is only by health that I can be enabled to alleviate your situation in future. For some time you must do what you can of yourself for relief; and bear your mind up with the consciousness that your situation cannot last for ever, and that for the present you may console yourself against the reproaches of Mrs. Abbey. Whatever obligations you may have had to her you have none now, as she has reproached you. I do not know what property you have, but I will enquire into it: be sure however that beyond the obligation that a lodger may have to a landlord you have none to Mrs. Abbey. Let the surety of this make you laugh at Mrs. A's foolish tattle. Mrs. Dilke's Brother has got your Dog. She is now very well—still liable to Illness. I will get her to come and see you if I can make up my mind on the propriety of introducing a stranger into Abbey's house. Be careful to let no fretting injure your health as I have suffered it—health is the greatest of blessings—with *health* and *hope* we should be content to live, and so you will find as you grow older—I am

---

[1] In the manuscript, *fine*.

my dear Fanny
your affectionate Brother
John —

CXXXIX.

To CHARLES WENTWORTH DILKE.

My dear Dilke,

As Brown is not to be a fixture at Hampstead, I have at last made up my mind to send home all lent books. I should have seen you before this, but my mind has been at work all over the world to find out what to do. I have my choice of three things, or at least two,—South America, or Surgeon to an Indiaman; which last, I think, will be my fate. I shall resolve in a few days. Remember me to Mrs. D. and Charles, and your father and mother.

Ever truly yours
John Keats

The manuscript of this letter, which bears no date, postmark, or further address than "C. W. Dilke Esq.", has on it a pencilled memorandum assigning it to the year 1820. It would therefore seem to belong to the time just before the departure of Brown for Scotland on the 7th of May 1820. Mr. Dilke notes that "Brown let his house, as he was accustomed to do in the summer—and therefore Keats was obliged to remove." As regards the scheme of becoming Surgeon on board an Indiaman, see the letter to Fanny Keats of the 9th of June 1819 (Volume III, page 302).

CXL.

To JOHN TAYLOR.

11 June [1820].

My dear Taylor,

In reading over the proof of "St. Agnes' Eve" since I left Fleet street, I was struck with what appears to me an alteration in the seventh stanza very much for the worse. The passage I mean stands thus:—

> her maiden eyes incline
> Still on the floor, while many a sweeping train
> Pass by.

'Twas originally written—

> her maiden eyes divine
> Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
> Pass by.

My meaning is quite destroyed in the alteration. I do not use *train* for *concourse of passers by*, but for *skirts* sweeping along the floor.

In the first stanza my copy reads, second line—

> bitter *chill* it was,

to avoid the echo *cold* in the second line.

Ever yours sincerely
John Keats

CXLI.

To CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN.

My dear Brown,

I have only been to ——'s once since you left, when —— could not find your letters. Now this is bad of me. I should, in this instance, conquer the great aversion to breaking up my regular habits, which grows upon me more and more. True, I have an excuse in the weather, which drives one from shelter to shelter in any little excursion. I have not heard from George. My book is coming out with very low hopes, though not spirits, on my part. This shall be my last trial; not succeeding, I shall try what I can do in the apothecary line. When you hear from or see —— it is probable you will hear some complaints against me, which this notice is not intended to forestall. The fact is, I did behave badly; but it is to be attributed to my health, spirits, and the disadvantageous ground I stand on in society. I could go and accommodate matters if I were not too weary of the world. I know that they are more happy and comfortable than I am; therefore why should I trouble myself about it? I foresee I shall know very few people in the course of a year or two. Men get such different habits that they become as oil and vinegar to

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This undated letter belongs to the time between the 7th of May 1820, when Brown left for Scotland, and the 23rd of June, when Keats wrote to his sister that he *had* heard from George. The book referred to as coming out was *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and other Poems.*

one another. Thus far I have a consciousness of having been pretty dull and heavy, both in subject and phrase; I might add, enigmatical. I am in the wrong, and the world is in the right, I have no doubt. Fact is, I have had so many kindnesses done me by so many people, that I am cheveaux-de-frised with benefits, which I must jump over or break down. I met —— in town, a few days ago, who invited me to supper to meet Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, Haydon, and some more; I was too careful of my health to risk being out at night. Talking of that, I continue to improve slowly, but, I think, surely. There is a famous exhibition in Pall-Mall of the old English portraits by Vandyck and Holbein, Sir Peter Lely, and the great Sir Godfrey. Pleasant countenances predominate; so I will mention two or three unpleasant ones. There is James the First, whose appearance would disgrace a "Society for the Suppression of Women;" so very squalid and subdued to nothing he looks. Then, there is old Lord Burleigh, the high-priest of economy, the political save-all, who has the appearance of a Pharisee just rebuffed by a Gospel *bon-mot*. Then, there is George the Second, very like an unintellectual Voltaire, troubled with the gout and a bad temper. Then, there is young Devereux, the favourite, with every appearance of as slang a boxer as any in the Court; his face is cast in the mould of blackguardism with jockey-plaster. I shall soon begin upon "Lucy Vaughan Lloyd."[1] I do not begin composition yet, being willing, in case of a relapse, to have nothing to reproach myself with. I hope the weather will give you the slip; let it show itself and steal out of your company. When I have sent off this, I shall write another to some place about fifty miles in advance of you.

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[1] This is the pen-name under which he projected to publish *The Cap and Bells.*

Good morning to you.

Yours ever sincerely
John Keats

CXLII.

To Fanny Keats.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Friday Morn— [23 June 1820].
[*Postmark*, Kentish Town, 26 June 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

I had intended to delay seeing you till a Book which I am now publishing was out, expecting that to be the end of this week when I would have brought it to Walthamstow: on receiving your Letter of course I set myself to come to town, but was not able, for just as I

(CXLII) This letter would seem to have been written the morning after the attack of blood-spitting to which it refers. If so, the attack in question had place, like the former attack, on a Thursday. The letter must have been delayed, for the postmark is as distinctly as possible that of the 26th of June 1820, which was a Monday. On the same day that Keats was writing to his sister, Friday the 23rd of June 1820, Mrs. Gisborne wrote thus in her private journal in my possession :—"Yesterday evening we drank tea at Mr. Hunt's ; we found him ill, as he had been attacked with a bilious fever, soon after we last saw him, and was not recovered. His nephew was with him ; he appears grave, and very attentive to his uncle, listening to all his words, in silence. Mr. Keats was introduced to us the same evening ; he had lately been ill also, and spoke but little ; the Endymion was not mentioned, this person might not be its author ; but on observing his countenance and his eyes I persuaded was setting out yesterday morning a slight spitting of blood came on which returned rather more copiously at night. I have slept well and they tell me there is nothing material to fear. I will send my Book soon with a Letter which I have had from George who is with his family quite well.

Your affectionate Brother
John —

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myself that he was the very person. We talked of music, and of Italian and English singing; I mentioned that Farinelli had the art of taking breath imperceptibly, while he continued to hold one single note, alternately swelling out and diminishing the power of his voice like waves. Keats observed that this must in some degree be painful to the hearer, as when a diver descends into the hidden depths of the sea you feel an apprehension lest he may never rise again. These may not be his exact words as he spoke in a low tone." Probably the slight blood-spitting of the morning had made him careful; but to no effect. Mrs. Gisborne records later that she called at Hunt's the following Saturday and learnt from Mrs. Hunt that Hunt was worse and "that Mr. Keats was also ill in the house; he had burst a blood vessel the very night after we had seen him, and in order to be well attended, he had been moved from his lodgings in the neighbourhood, to Mr. Hunt's house." The "night after" must mean the night of the same day—22nd; and probably Keats moved from Wesleyan Place to Mortimer Terrace on the 23rd of June 1820.

CXLIII.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Mortimer Terrace
Wednesday
[*Postmark*, 6 July 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

I have had no return of the spitting of blood, and for two or three days have been getting a little stronger. I have no hopes of an entire reestablishment of my health under some months of patience. My Physician tells me I must contrive to pass the Winter in Italy. This is all very unfortunate for us—we have no recourse but patience, which I am now practicing better than ever I thought it possible for me. I have this moment received a Letter from Mr. Brown, dated Dunvegan Castle, Island of Skye. He is very well in health and spirits. My new publication has been out for some days and I have directed a Copy to be bound for you, which you will receive shortly. No one can regret Mr. Hodgkinson's ill fortune: I must own illness has not made such a Saint of me as to prevent my rejoiceing at his reverse. Keep yourself in as good hopes as possible; in case my illness

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Between the date of this letter and the probable date of the next, Mrs. Gisborne made the following entry in her journal:—"Wednesday 12 July. We drank tea at Mr. Hunt's; I was much pained by the sight of poor Keats, under sentence of death from Dr. Lamb. He never spoke and looks emaciated." It was perhaps immediately upon this visit that Mr. Gisborne wrote to Shelley the communication which induced his letter to Keats dated the 27th of July 1820.

should continue an unreasonable time many of my friends would I trust for my sake do all in their power to console and amuse you, at the least word from me—You may depend upon it that in case my strength returns I will do all in my power to extricate you from the Abbies [sic]. Be above all things careful of your health which is the corner stone of all pleasure.

Your affectionate Brother
John —

CXLIV.

To BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON.

My dear Haydon,

I am sorry to be obliged to try your patience a few more days when you will have the Book sent from Town. I am glad to hear you are in progress with

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(CXLIV) This pathetic little note, the manuscript of which is preserved in Haydon's journal without date, superscription, or address, is almost certainly a reply to the two following letters. It is to be noted in passing that the picture referred to is recorded by Mr. F. W. Haydon to have been the Lazarus now in the National Gallery; and further that the words printed as *my mind* stand in the original as *I mind.* The first of Haydon's two letters appears to have been written in Keats's lodgings at Kentish Town towards the end of his stay in them; for beside the internal evidence that Haydon had come over and found his friend out, there is the fact that the latter is only addressed "John Keats Esq", and is written on a piece of the same paper that Keats was using—a different paper from what Haydon used:

My dear Keats,

I have been coming every day for months to see you, and determined this morning as I heard you were still ill or worse to walk over in spite of all pestering hindrances. I regret my very dear Keats to find by your landlady's account that you are very another Picture. Go on. I am afraid I shall pop off just when my mind is able to run alone.

Your sincere friend
John Keats

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poorly. I hope you have Darling's advice, on whose skill I have the greatest reliance—certainly I was as bad as anybody could be, and I have recovered, therefore, I hope, indeed I have no doubt, you will ultimately get round again, if you attend strictly to yourself, and avoid cold and night air.—I wish you would write me a line to say how you really are.—I have been sitting for some little time in your Lodgings, which are clean, airy, and quiet. I wish to God you were sitting with me—I am sorry to hear Hunt has been laid up too—take care of yourself my dear Keats.

Believe me
Ever most affectionately and sincerely
your friend
B. R. Haydon.

The second letter, which has the year-date very indistinctly written, but which must belong to 1820, as Keats's 1817 volume of poems was ready long before July 1817, gives us the precise locality of the lodgings, for it is addressed "John Keats Esq, Wesleyan Place, Kentish Town"—whence it is to be presumed Haydon did not know Keats had removed in the meantime for Mortimer Terrace :—

My dear Keats,

When I called the other morning, I did not know your Poems were out, or I should have read them before I came in order to tell you my opinion—I have done so since, and really I cannot tell you how very highly I estimate them—they justify the assertions of all your Friends regarding your poetical powers. I can assure you, whatever you may do, you will not exceed my opinion of them. Have you done with Chapman's Homer? I want it very badly at this moment; will you let the bearer have it, as well as let me know how you are?

I am dear Keats
ever yours
B. R. Haydon.

July 14 1820

CXLV.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

[*Postmark*, 22 July 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

I have been gaining strength for some days: it would be well if I could at the same time say I [am] gaining hopes of a speedy recovery. My constitution has suffered very much for two or three years past, so as to be scarcely able to make head against illness, which the natural activity and impatience of my Mind renders more dangerous. It will at all events be a very tedious affair, and you must expect to hear very little alteration of any sort in me for some time. You ought to have received a copy of my Book ten days ago I shall send another message to the Booksellers. One of the Mr. Wylie's will be here to day or to morrow when I will ask him to send you George's Letter. Writing the smallest note is so an[n]oying to me that I have waited till I shall see him. Mr. Hunt does every thing in his power to make the time pass as agreeably with me as possible. I read the greatest part of the day, and generally take two half hour walks a day up and down the terrace which is very much pester'd with cries, ballad singers, and street music. We have been so unfortunate for so long a time, every event has been of so depressing a nature that I must

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The postmark is that of Hampstead; but Keats was certainly still staying at Kentish Town, whence, probably, the letter was carried to Hampstead and posted.

persuade myself to think some change will take place in the aspect of our affairs. I shall be upon the look out for a trump card.

Your affectionate
Brother, John —

CXLVI.

To Fanny Keats.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Wentworth Place.
[*Postmark*, 4 o'Clock, 14 August 1820.]

My dear Fanny,

'Tis a long time since I received your last. An accident of an unpleasant nature occur[r]ed at Mr. Hunt's and prevented me from answering you, that is to say made me nervous. That you may not suppose it worse I will mention that some one of Mr. Hunt's household opened a Letter of mine—upon which I immediately left Mortimer Terrace, with the intention of taking to Mrs. Bentley's again; fortunately I am not in so lone a situation, but am staying a short time with Mrs. Brawne

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(CXLVI) The beginning of this letter does not quite explain itself, as the incident of the opened letter at Hunt's had occurred as recently as the 10th of August, and had not been known by Keats till the 12th. This is quite clear from Mrs. Gisborne's manuscript journal, wherein it is mentioned that the Gisbornes were at Hunt's on Thursday the 10th, and that the Hunts promised to come to the Gisborne's on Saturday the 12th. On Saturday the 19th "Mrs. Hunt came in to tea; she called to apologise for herself and Mr. Hunt, for not having kept their appointment on the Saturday before; they were prevented by an unpleasant circumstance that happened to Keats. While we [were] there on Thursday a note was brought to him after who lives in the House which was Mrs. Dilke's. I am excessively nervous: a person I am not quite used to entering the room half choaks me. 'Tis not yet Consumption I believe, but it would be were I to remain in this climate all the Winter: so I am thinking of either voyageing or travelling to Italy. Yesterday I received an invitation from Mr. Shelley, a Gentleman residing at Pisa, to spend the Winter with him: if I go I must be away in a Month or even less. I am glad you like the Poems, you must hope with me that time and health will produce you some more. This is the first morning I have been able to sit to the paper and have many Letters to write if I can manage them. God bless you my dear Sister.

Your affectionate Brother

John —

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he had retired to his room to repose himself; Mrs. Hunt being occupied with the child desired her upper servant to take it to him, and thought no more about it. On Friday the servant left her, and on Saturday Thornton produced this note open (which contained not a word of the least consequence), telling his mother that the servant had given it him before she left the house with injunctions not to shew it to his mother till the following day. Poor Keats was affected by this inconceivable circumstance beyond what can be imagined; he wept for several hours, and resolved, notwithstanding Hunt's entreaties, to leave the house; he went to Hampstead that same evening."

CXLVII.

To PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

Hampstead, August 1820.

My dear Shelley,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost overoccupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to

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As to the date and place inscribed at the head of this letter, some explanation must be offered. In the *Shelley Memorials* it is fully dated the 10th of August. Now Keats had not on the 10th of August returned to Hampstead; and according to his letter of the 14th to his sister he only received Shelley's invitation on the 13th. As the 14th was the first day he had sat down to write since his recent attack, that is the earliest date assignable to the reply; and this to Shelley was probably one of the several letters he had to write that day; but it seems safer to leave the day blank for the present. Shelley's letter written at Pisa on the 27th of July should in the natural course, if posted at once, have reached Keats about a fortnight later, and would probably be answered promptly. It is as follows:—

Pisa, 27th July, 1820.

My dear Keats,

I hear with great pain the dangerous accident you have undergone, and Mr. Gisborne, who gives me the account of it, adds that you continue to wear a consumptive appearance. This consumption is a disease particularly fond of people who write such good verses as you have done, and with the assistance of an English winter it can often indulge its selection. I do not think that young and amiable poets are bound to gratify its taste; they have entered into no bond with the muses to that effect. But seriously (for I am joking on what I am very anxious about) I think you would do well to pass the winter in Italy and avoid so tremendous an accident, and if you think it as necessary as I do, so long as you continue to find Pisa or its neighbourhood agreeable to you, Mrs. Shelley unites prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering, hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed

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with myself in urging the request that you would take up your residence with us. You might come by sea to Leghorn (France is not worth seeing, and the sea is particularly good for weak lungs), which is within a few miles of us. You ought, at all events, to see Italy, and your health, which I suggest as a motive, may be an excuse to you. I spare declamation about the statues, and paintings, and ruins, and what is a greater piece of forbearance, about the mountains and streams, the fields, the colours of the sky, and the sky itself.

I have lately read your *Endymion* again, and even with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This people in general will not endure, and that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. I feel persuaded that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will. I always tell Ollier to send you copies of my books. *Prometheus Unbound* I imagine you will receive nearly at the same time with this letter. *The Cenci* I hope you have already received—it was studiously composed in a different style.

Below the *good* how far ! but far above the *great !*

In poetry I have sought to avoid system and mannerism. I wish those who excel me in genius would pursue the same plan.

Whether you remain in England, or journey to Italy, believe that you carry with you my anxious wishes for your health, happiness, and success wherever you are, or whatever you undertake, and that I am,

Yours sincerely,
P. B. Shelley.

On the 11th of November 1820 Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt (Hunt's Correspondence, Volume I, page 159):

" Where is Keats now ? I am anxiously expecting him in Italy, when I shall take care to bestow every possible attention on him. I consider his a most valuable life, and I am deeply interested in that, come what extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of the *Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits now-a-days is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have "self-concentration"—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is

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his safety. I intend to be the physician both of his body and his soul, to keep the one warm, and to teach the other Greek and Spanish. I am aware, indeed, in part, that I am nourishing a rival who will far surpass me; and this is an additional motive, and will be an added pleasure."

In an undated letter still in manuscript Shelley wrote later on:

"Keats is very ill at Naples—I have written to him to ask him to come to Pisa, without however inviting him into our own house. We are not rich enough for that sort of thing. Poor fellow!"

It is a curious coincidence that the paper on which this postscript is written was originally destined to go to Keats, for it bears the cancelled words—

My dear Keats,
I learn this moment that you are at Naples and that...

Severn told me of a letter "of touching interest," received by Keats from Shelley in Italy—a letter which was stolen from Severn in later years, and which I have never succeeded in tracing.

not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk. I am in expectation of *Prometheus* every day. Could I have my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be but now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first blights, on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in the volume I send you[1] have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for hope of gain; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now. I must express once more my deep sense of your kindness, adding my sincere thanks and respects for Mrs. Shelley. In the hope of soon seeing you,

I remain most sincerely yours,
John Keats.

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[1] *Lamia, Isabella* &c. It will be remembered that it was a copy of this book, belonging to Hunt, that was found doubled back in the drowned Shelley's pocket, and that Hunt cast upon the burning relics of his friend.

CXLVIII.

To JOHN TAYLOR.

Wentworth Place
[14 August 1820].

My dear Taylor,

My chest is in such a nervous state, that anything extra, such as speaking to an unaccustomed person, or writing a note, half suffocates me. This journey to Italy wakes me at daylight every morning, and haunts me horribly. I shall endeavour to go, though it be with the sensation of marching up against a battery.[1] The first step towards it is to know the expense of a journey and a year's residence, which if you will ascertain for me, and let me know early, you will greatly serve me. I have more to say, but must desist, for every line I write increases the tightness of my chest, and I have many more to do. I am convinced that this sort of thing does not continue for nothing. If you can come, with any of our friends, do.

Your sincere friend,
John Keats.

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[1] This curiously characteristic expression, which occurs in almost the same words in the foregoing letter to Shelley (page 95), may be compared with a somewhat similar one at page 141, where Keats writes to Fanny Brawne that he can "no more use soothing words" to her than if he were "engaged in a charge of Cavalry."

CXLIX.

To BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON.

Mrs. Brawne's Next door to Brown's
Wentworth Place
Hampstead
1820

My dear Haydon,

I am much better this morning than I was when I wrote the note: that is my hopes and spirits are better which are generally at a very low ebb from such a protracted illness. I shall be here for a little time and at home all and every day. A journey to Italy is recommended me, which I have resolved upon and am beginning to prepare for. Hoping to see you shortly

I remain
Your affectionate friend
John Keats

Probably this note also belongs to the 14th of August 1820, as one of the many Keats was writing that day. Writing of Keats after his death, Haydon says—"The last time I ever saw him was at Hampstead, lying in a white bed with a book, hectic and on his back, irritable at his weakness and wounded at the way he had been used. He seemed to be going out of life with a contempt for the world and no hopes of the other. I told him to be calm, but he muttered that if he did not soon get better he would destroy himself. I tried to reason against such violence, but it was no use; he grew angry, and I went away deeply affected." Had the painter but followed his own counsel!

CL.

To CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN.

My dear Brown,

You may not have heard from ——, or ——, or in any way, that an attack of spitting of blood, and all its weakening consequences, has prevented me from writing for so long a time. I have matter now for a very long letter, but not news: so I must cut everything short. I shall make some confession, which you will be the only person, for many reasons, I shall trust with. A winter

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This letter clearly belongs to the latter part of August. If Keats heard from Shelley on the 13th, as indicated in his letter of the 14th to Fanny Keats, it may reasonably be supposed that the letter to Brown was written about the 20th of August 1820 from Hampstead. Referring to the last sentence but one, it is to be recorded that, on Keats's return from Kentish Town, Hunt sent him the following letter from Mortimer Terrace, addressed to "Mrs. Brawn[e]'s, Wentworth Place":—

Giovani Mio,

I shall see you this afternoon, and most probably every day. You judge rightly when you think I shall be glad at your putting up awhile where you are, instead of that solitary place. There are humanities in the house; and if wisdom loves to live with children round her knees (the tax-gatherer apart), sick wisdom, I think, should love to live with arms about it's waist. I need not say how you gratify me by the impulse that led you to write a particular sentence in your letter, for you must have seen by this time how much I am attached to yourself.

I am indicating at as dull a rate as a battered finger-post in wet weather. Not that I am ill: for I am very well altogether.

Your affectionate Friend
Leigh Hunt.

This letter has already appeared in *Papers of a Critic*, Volume I, pages 9-10.

in England would, I have not a doubt, kill me; so I have resolved to go to Italy, either by sea or land. Not that I have any great hopes of that, for, I think, there is a core of disease in me not easy to pull out. I shall be obliged to set off in less than a month. Do not, my dear Brown, teaze yourself about me. You must fill up your time as well as you can, and as happily. You must think of my faults as lightly as you can. When I have health I will bring up the long arrears of letters I owe you. My book has had good success among the literary people, and I believe has a moderate sale. I have seen very few people we know. —— has visited me more than any one. I would go to —— and make some inquiries after you, if I could with any bearable sensation; but a person I am not quite used to causes an oppression on my chest. Last week I received a letter from Shelley, at Pisa, of a very kind nature, asking me to pass the winter with him. Hunt has behaved very kindly to me. You shall hear from me again shortly.

Your affectionate friend
John Keats

CLI.

To FANNY KEATS.

Rd. Abbey's Esq.,
Walthamstow.

Wentworth Place
Wednesday Morning
[*Postmark*, 23 August 1820].

My dear Fanny,

It will give me great Pleasure to see you here, if you can contrive it; though I confess I should have written instead of calling upon you before I set out on my journey, from the wish of avoiding unpleasant partings. Meantime I will just notice some parts of your Letter. The seal-breaking business[1] is over blown. I think no more of it. A few days ago I wrote to Mr. Brown, asking him to befriend me with his company to Rome. His answer is not yet come, and I do not know when it will, not being certain how far he may be from the Post Office to which my communication is addressed. Let us hope he will go with me. George certainly ought to have written to you: his troubles, anxieties and fatigues are not quite a sufficient excuse. In the course of time you will be sure to find that this neglect, is not forgetfulness. I am sorry to hear you have been so ill and in such low spirits. Now you are better, keep so. Do not suffer your Mind to dwell on unpleasant reflexions—that sort of thing has been the destruction of my health. Nothing is so bad as want of health—it makes one envy scavengers and cinder-sifters. There are enough real distresses and evils in wait for every one to try the most vigorous health. Not that I would say yours are not real—but they are such as to tempt you to employ your imagination on them, rather than endeavour to dismiss them entirely. Do not diet your mind with grief, it destroys the constitution; but let your chief care be of your health, and with that you will meet your share of Pleasure in the world—do not doubt it. If I return well from Italy I will turn over a new leaf for you. I have been improving lately, and have very good hopes of "turning a Neuk" and cheating the consumption. I am not well enough to write to George myself—Mr. Haslam[1] will do it for me, to whom I shall write to day, desiring him to mention as gently as possible your complaint. I am my dear Fanny

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[1] See page 92.

Your affectionate Brother
John.

CLII.

To CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN.

My dear Brown,

I ought to be off at the end of this week, as the cold winds begin to blow towards evening;—but I will wait till I have your answer to this. I am to be introduced, before I set out, to a Dr. Clark, a physician settled at Rome, who promises to befriend me in every way there. The sale of my book is very slow, though it has been very highly rated. One of the causes, I understand from different quarters, of the unpopularity of this new book, is the offence the ladies take at me. On thinking that matter over, I am certain that I have said nothing in a spirit to displease any woman I would care to please; but still there is a tendency to class women in my books with roses and sweetmeats,—they never see themselves dominant. I will say no more, but, waiting in anxiety for your answer, doff my hat, and make a purse as long as I can.

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[1] Not, one would have thought, a very fortunate choice, seeing that Mr. Haslam was under monetary obligations to George Keats (page 21 of this volume), and had already shown a not very reassuring attitude in tearing up a letter from George entrusted to him by John (pages 301 and 323, Volume III).

(CLII) The date upon which Keats left Hampstead on his journey to Italy was, I believe, the 8th of September 1820. He possessed and used a copy of Leigh Hunt's *Literary Pocket-book* for 1819, which he left in the possession of Miss Brawne; and she also wrote memoranda in it. These latter were probably written in 1820; and one, under the 8th of September, is "Mr. Keats left Hampstead". On the 8th of September 1819 he was at Winchester.

Your affectionate friend,
John Keats.

CLIII.

To ———.

The passport arrived before we started. I don't think I shall be long ill. God bless you—farewell.

John Keats

(CLIII) The scrap of paper with these few words written upon it bears no date, address, or other indication as to what point of his journey Keats had reached when he wrote it, or as to the person for whom it was destined.

CLIV.

To CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN.

Wentworth Place,
Hampstead.

Saturday, Sept. 28 [1820]
Maria Crowther,
Off Yarmouth, Isle of Wight.

My dear Brown,

The time has not yet come for a pleasant letter from me. I have delayed writing to you from time to time, because I felt how impossible it was to enliven you with one heartening hope of my recovery; this morning in bed the matter struck me in a different manner; I thought I would write "while I was in some liking," or I might become too ill to write at all; and then if the desire to have written should become strong it would be a great affliction to me. I have many more letters to write, and I bless my stars that I have begun, for time seems to press,—this may be my best opportunity. We are in a calm, and I am easy enough this morning. If my spirits seem too low you may in some degree impute it to our having been at sea a fortnight without making any way. I was very disappointed at not meeting you at Bedhampton, and am very provoked at the thought of you being at Chichester to-day.[1] I should have delighted

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The original letter is in the possession of Mr. F. Locker. I give the text from it.

[1] Lord Houghton records that, "when Keats's ship was driven back into Portsmouth by stress of weather, Mr. Brown was staying in the neighbourhood within ten miles, when Keats landed and spent a day on shore." Mr. Dilke adds "when Keats landed and went to my sisters [Mrs. Snook's] at Bedhampton—Brown was staying at my father's at Chichester."

in setting off for London for the sensation merely,—for what should I do there? I could not leave my lungs or stomach or other worse things behind me. I wish to write on subjects that will not agitate me much—there is one I must mention and have done with it. Even if my body would recover of itself, this would prevent it. The very thing which I want to live most for will be a great occasion of my death. I cannot help it. Who can help it? Were I in health it would make me ill, and how can I bear it in my state? I dare say you will be able to guess on what subject I am harping—you know what was my greatest pain during the first part of my illness at your house. I wish for death every day and night to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even those pains which are better than nothing. Land and sea, weakness and decline, are great separators, but death is the great divorcer for ever. When the pang of this thought has passed through my mind, I may say the bitterness of death is passed. I often wish for you that you might flatter me with the best. I think without my mentioning it for my sake you would be a friend to Miss Brawne when I am dead. You think she has many faults—but, for my sake, think she has not one. If there is anything you can do for her by word or deed I know you will do it. I am in a state at present in which woman merely as woman can have no more power over me than stocks and stones, and yet the difference of my sensations with respect to Miss Brawne and my sister is amazing. The one seems to absorb the other to a degree incredible. I seldom think of my brother and sister in America. The thought of leaving Miss Brawne is beyond everything horrible—the sense of darkness coming over me—I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing. Some of the phrases she was in the habit of using during my last nursing at Wentworth Place ring in my ears. Is there another life? Shall I awake and find all this a dream? There must be, we cannot be created for this sort of suffering. The receiving this letter is to be one of yours. I will say nothing about our friendship, or rather yours to me, more than that, as you deserve to escape, you will never be so unhappy as I am. I should think of—you in my last moments. I shall endeavour to write to Miss Brawne if possible to day. A sudden stop to my life in the middle of one of these letters would be no bad thing, for it keeps one in a sort of fever awhile. Though fatigued with a letter longer than any I have written for a long while, it would be better to go on for ever than awake to a sense of contrary winds. We expect to put into Portland Roads to-night. The captain, the crew, and the passengers, are all ill-tempered and weary. I shall write to Dilke. I feel as if I was closing my last letter to you.

My dear Brown,
Your affectionate friend,
John Keats.

The following paragraphs from Lord Houghton's *Life* &c. serve to connect this letter with the next, hitherto unpublished:

"A violent storm in the Bay of Biscay lasted for thirty hours, and exposed the voyagers to considerable danger. 'What awful music!' cried Severn, as the waves raged against the vessel. 'Yes,' said Keats, as a sudden lurch inundated the cabin, 'Water parted from the sea.' After the tempest had subsided, Keats was reading the description of the storm in 'Don Juan,' and cast the book on the floor in a transport of indignation. 'How horrible an example of human nature,' he cried, 'is this man, who has no pleasure left him but to gloat over and jeer, at the most awful incidents of life. Oh! this is a paltry originality, which consists in making solemn things gay, and gay things solemn, and yet it will fascinate thousands, by the very diabolical outrage of their sympathies. Byron's perverted education makes him assume to feel, and try to impart to

CLV.

To MRS. BRAWNE.

Wentworth Place,
Hampstead.

Oct. 24 [1820], Naples Harbour.

My dear Mrs. Brawne,

A few words will tell you what sort of a Passage we had, and what situation we are in, and few they must be on account of the Quarantine, our Letters being liable to be opened for the purpose of fumigation at the Health Office.[1] We have to remain in the vessel ten days and are at present shut in a tier of ships. The sea air has been beneficial to me about to as great an extent as squally weather and bad accommodations and provisions has done harm. So I am about as I was. Give my Love to Fanny and tell her, if I were well there is enough in this Port of Naples to fill a quire of Paper—but it

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others, those depraved sensations which the want of any education excites in many.'

"The invalid's sufferings increased during the latter part of the voyage and a ten-days' miserable quarantine at Naples. But, when once fairly landed and in comfortable quarters, his spirits appeared somewhat to revive, and the glorious scenery to bring back, at moments, his old sense of delight. But these transitory gleams, which the hopeful heart of Severn caught and stored up, were in truth only remarkable as contrasted with the chronic gloom that overcame all things, even his love. What other words can tell the story like his own? What fiction could colour more deeply this picture of all that is most precious in existence becoming most painful and destructive? What profounder pathos can the world of tragedy exhibit than this expression of all that is good and great in nature writhing impotent in the grasp of an implacable destiny?"

[1] The original letter, in the possession of Sir C. Dilke, is very much discoloured, perhaps through the operations of the Health Office.

looks like a dream—every man who can row his boat and walk and talk seems a different being from myself. I do not feel in the world. It has been unfortunate for me that one of the Passengers is a young Lady in a Consumption—her imprudence has vexed me very much—the knowledge of her complaints[1]—the flushings in her face, all her bad symptoms have preyed upon me—they would have done so had I been in good health.[2] Severn now is a very good fellow but his nerves are too strong to be hurt by other people's illnesses—I remember poor Rice wore me in the same way in the Isle of Wight—I shall feel a load off me when the Lady vanishes out of my sight. It is impossible to describe exactly in what state of health I am—at this moment I am suffering from indigestion very much, which makes such stuff of this Letter. I would always wish you to think me a little worse than I really am; not being of a sanguine disposition I am likely to succeed. If I do not recover your regret will be softened—if I do your pleasure will be doubled. I dare not fix my Mind upon Fanny, I have not dared to think of her. The only comfort I have had that way has been in thinking for hours together of having the knife she gave me put in a silver-case—the hair in a Locket—and the Pocket Book in a gold net. Show her this. I dare say no more. Yet you must not believe I am so ill as this Letter may look, for if ever there was a person born without the faculty of hoping I am he. Severn is writing to Haslam, and I have just asked him to request Haslam to send you his account of my health. O what an account I could give you of the Bay of Naples if I could once more feel myself a Citizen of this world—I feel a spirit in my Brain would lay it forth pleasantly—O what a misery it is to have an intellect in splints! My Love again to Fanny—tell Tootts[1] I wish I could pitch her a basket of grapes—and tell Sam the fellows catch here with a line a little fish much like an anchovy, pull them up fast. Remember me to Mr. and Mrs. Dilke—mention to Brown that I wrote him a letter at Port[s]-mouth which I did not send and am in doubt if he ever will see it.

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[1] So in the manuscript, but *complaint* was probably what was meant.

[2] Medwin quoted some half dozen lines from this part of the letter, altered to suit the purpose of the moment, in his Life of Shelley (Volume II, page 96).

my dear Mrs. Brawne
Yours sincerely and affectionate
John Keats —

Good bye Fanny! God bless you.

CLVI.

To CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN.

Naples,
1 November [1820].

My dear Brown,

Yesterday we were let out of quarantine, during which my health suffered more from bad air and the stifled cabin than it had done the whole voyage. The fresh air revived me a little, and I hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short calm letter;—if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what

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[1] Margaret Brawne, Fanny's younger sister, I presume; but I have no certain knowledge that she bore that pet-name: "Sam" was certainly her brother.

I would fainest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little;—perhaps it may relieve the load of *wretchedness* which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. Oh, God! God! God! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her—I see her—I hear her. There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. This was the case when I was in England; I cannot recollect, without shuddering, the time that I was a prisoner at Hunt's, and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day. Then there was a good hope of seeing her again—Now!—O that I could be buried near where she lives! I am afraid to write to her—to receive a letter from her—to see her handwriting would break my heart—even to hear of her anyhow, to see her name written, would be more than I can bear. My dear Brown, what am I to do? Where can I look for consolation or ease? If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. Indeed, through the whole of my illness, both at your house and at Kentish Town, this fever has never ceased wearing me out. When you write to me, which you will do immediately, write to Rome (*poste restante*)—if she is well and happy, put a mark thus +; if——

Remember me to all. I will endeavour to bear my miseries patiently. A person in my state of health should not have such miseries to bear. Write a short note to my sister, saying you have heard from me. Severn is very well. If I were in better health I would urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give me any comfort. Is there any news of George? O, that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers!—then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit. My dear Brown, for my sake, be her advocate for ever. I cannot say a word about Naples; I do not feel at all concerned in the thousand novelties around me. I am afraid to write to her. I should like her to know that I do not forget her. Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end? God bless her, and her mother, and my sister, and George, and his wife, and you, and all!

Your ever affectionate friend,
John Keats.

Thursday [2 November 1820].—I was a day too early for the Courier. He sets out now. I have been more calm to-day, though in a half dread of not continuing so. I said nothing of my health; I know nothing of it; you will hear Severn's account, from [Haslam]. I must leave off. You bring my thoughts too near to [Fanny]. God bless you!

Lord Houghton adds here:—

"Little things, that at other times might have been well passed over, now struck his susceptible imagination with intense disgust. He could not bear to go to the opera, on account of the sentinels who stood constantly on the stage, and whom he at first took for parts of the scenic effect. 'We will go at once to Rome,' he said; 'I know my end approaches, and the continual visible tyranny of this government prevents me from having any peace of mind. I could not lie quietly here. I will not leave even my bones in the midst of this despotism.'

"He had received at Naples a most kind letter from Mr. Shelley, anxiously inquiring about his health, offering him advice as to the

CLVII.

To CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN.

Rome, 30 November 1820.

My dear Brown,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book,—yet I am much better than I was in quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter

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adaptation of diet to the climate, and concluding with an urgent invitation to Pisa, where he could ensure him every comfort and attention. But for one circumstance, it is unfortunate that this offer was not accepted, as it might have spared at least some annoyances to the sufferer, and much painful responsibility, extreme anxiety, and unrelieved distress to his friend.

"On arriving at Rome he delivered the letter of introduction already mentioned, to Dr. (now Sir James) Clark, at that time rising into high repute as a physician. The circumstances of the young patient were such as to ensure compassion from any person of feeling, and perhaps sympathy and attention from superior minds. But the attention he received was that of all the skill and knowledge that science could confer, and the sympathy was of the kind which discharges the weight of obligation for gratuitous service, and substitutes affection for benevolence and gratitude. All that wise solicitude and delicate thoughtfulness could do to light up the dark passages of mortal sickness and soothe the pillow of the forlorn stranger was done, and, if that was little, the effort was not the less. In the history of most professional men this incident might be remarkable, but it is an ordinary sample of the daily life of this distinguished physician, who seems to have felt it a moral duty to make his own scientific eminence the measure of his devotion to the relief and solace of all men of intellectual pursuits, and to have applied his beneficence the most effectually to those whose nervous susceptibility renders them the least fit to endure that physical suffering to which, above all men, they are constantly exposed.

"The only other introduction Keats had with him, was from Sir T. Lawrence to Canova, but the time was gone by when even Art the pro-ing and con-ing of anything interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been—but it appears to me—however, I will not speak of that subject. I must have been at Bedhampton nearly at the time you were writing to me from Chichester[1]—how unfortunate—and to pass on the river too! There was my star predominant! I cannot answer anything in your letter, which followed me from Naples to Rome, because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any handwriting of a friend I love so much as I do you. Yet I ride the little horse, and, at my worst, even in quarantine, summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me; I have been well, healthy, alert, &c., walking with her, and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling

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could please, and his shattered nerves refused to convey to his intelligence the impressions by which a few months before he would have been rapt into ecstasy. Dr. Clark procured Keats a lodging in the Piazza di Spagna, opposite to his own abode; it was in the first house on your right hand as you ascend the steps of the 'Trinità del Monte.' Rome, at that time, was far from affording the comforts to the stranger that are now so abundant, and the violent Italian superstitions respecting the infection of all dangerous disease, rendered the circumstances of an invalid most harassing and painful. Suspicion tracked him as he grew worse, and countenances darkened round as the world narrowed about him; ill-will increased just when sympathy was most wanted, and the essential loneliness of the death-bed was increased by the alienation of all other men; the last grasp of the swimmer for life was ruthlessly cast off by his stronger comrade, and the affections that are wont to survive the body were crushed down in one common dissolution. At least from this desolation Keats was saved by the love and care of Mr. Severn and Dr. Clark."

[1] See foot-note at page 105.

for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. There, you rogue, I put you to the torture; but you must bring your philosophy to bear, as I do mine, really, or how should I be able to live? Dr. Clark is very attentive to me; he says, there is very little the matter with my lungs, but my stomach, he says, is very bad. I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George, for it runs in my head we shall all die young. I have not written to Reynolds yet, which he must think very neglectful; being anxious to send him a good account of my health, I have delayed it from week to week. If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the mistakes made during sickness; and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven. Severn is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends, and tell Haslam I should not have left London without taking leave of him, but from being so low in body and mind. Write to George as soon as you receive this, and tell him how I am, as far as you can guess; and also a note to my sister—who walks about my imagination like a ghost—she is so like Tom. I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow.

God bless you!
John Keats.

Of this letter Lord Houghton says:—"I have now to give the last letter of Keats in my possession; probably the last he wrote. One phrase in the commencement of it became frequent with him; he would continually ask Dr. Clark, 'When will this posthumous life of mine come to an end?' Yet when this was written, hope was evidently not extinguished within him, and it does appear not unlikely that if the soothing influences of climate had been sooner brought to bear on his constitution, and his nervous irritability from other causes been diminished, his life might have been saved, or at least, considerably prolonged."

The following letter, though it bears no address, appears to be a reply to one from Severn, written three weeks later than the above :—

Louisville March 3rd 1821

Sir,

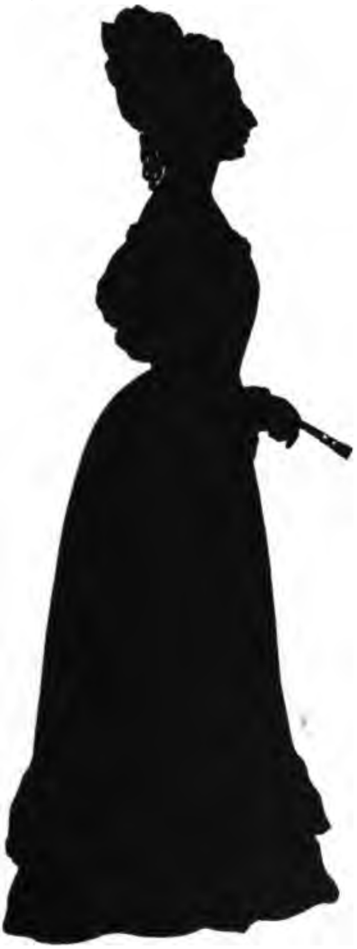
I am obliged for your's of the Decr 21st informing me that my Brother is in Rome, and that he is better. The coldness of your letter explains itself; I hope John is not impressed with the same sentiments, it may be an amiable resentment on your part and you are at liberty to cherish it; whatever errors you may fall into thro' kindness for my Brother however injurious to me, are easily forgiven. I might have reasonably hoped a longer seige of doubts would be necessary to destroy your good opinion of me. In many letters of distant and late dates to John, to you and to Haslam unanswered, I have explained my prospects, my situation. I have a firm faith that John has every dependance on my honour and affection, and altho' the chances have gone against me, my disappointments having been just as numerous as my risques, I am still above water and hope soon to be able to releive him.

I once more thank you most fervently for your kindness to John, and am Sir

Your Obt Hbl serv
George Keats.

LETTERS TO FANNY BRAWNE.

[The office of editing the following letters was not arduous so far as the text is concerned, for they are wholly free from anything which it seems desirable to omit; they are legibly and, except in trivial details, correctly written, leaving little to do beyond the correction of a few obvious clerical errors, and such amendment of punctuation as is invariably required by letters not written for the press. The arrangement of the series in proper sequence was less simple; for, except as regards the first ten, the evidence in this behalf is almost wholly inferential and collateral; and I have had to be content with strong probability where it is impossible to arrive at absolute certainty. Of the whole thirty-nine letters, not one bears the date of the year, except as furnished in the postmarks of Numbers I to X; two only go so far as to specify in writing the day of the month, or even the month itself; and one of these two Keats has dated a day later than the date shown by the postmark. Those which passed through the post, Numbers I to X, are fully addressed to "Miss Brawne, Wentworth Place, Hampstead," the word "Middx." being added in the case of the seven from the country, but not in that of the three from London. Numbers XI to XVIII and XX to XXXIII are addressed simply to "Miss Brawne"; while Numbers XIX, XXXIV, XXXV, and XXXVIII are addressed to "Mrs. Brawne," and Numbers XXXVI, XXXVII, and XXXIX bear no address whatever. These material details are not without a psychological significance: the total absence of interest in the progress of time (the sordid current time) tallies with the profound worship of things so remote as perfect beauty; and the addressing of four of the letters to Mrs. Brawne instead of Miss Brawne indicates, to my mind, not mere accident, but a sensitiveness to observation from any unaccustomed quarter: three of the letters so addressed were certainly written at Kentish Town, and would not be likely to be sent by the same hand usually employed to take those written while the poet was next door to his betrothed; the other one was, I have no doubt, sent only from one house to the other; but perhaps the usual messenger may have chanced to be out of the way. The letters fall naturally into three groups, namely (1) those written during Keats's sojourn in the Isle of Wight, Winchester, and Westminster in the Summer and Autumn of 1819, (2) those written from Brown's house in Wentworth Place during Keats's illness in the early part of 1820 and sent by hand to Mrs. Brawne's house, next door, and (3) those written after he was able to leave Wentworth Place to stay near and then with Leigh Hunt at Kentish Town, and before his departure for Italy in September 1820. Of the order of the first and last groups there is no reasonable doubt; and, although there can be no absolute certainty in regard to the whole series of the central group, I do not think any important error will have been made in the arrangement here adopted. Thirty-seven of the thirty-nine letters were first published in 1877, when Joseph Severn was still alive. Esteem for him and regret for his death prompt me to leave standing before the whole series the dedication of the original thirty-seven letters.—H. B. F.]



Fanny Brawne.

From a Silhouette by Edouart.

TO JOSEPH SEVERN,
ROME.

The happy circumstance that the fifty-seventh year since you watched at the death-bed of Keats finds you still among us, makes it impossible to inscribe any other name than yours in front of these letters, intimately connected as they are with the decline of the poet's life, concerning the latter part of which you alone have full knowledge.

It cannot be but that some of the letters will give you pain,—and notably the three written when the poet's face was already turned towards that land whither you accompanied him, whence he knew there was no return for him, and where you still live near the hallowed place of his burial. All who love Keats's memory must share such pain in the contemplation of his agony of soul. But you who love him having known, and we who love him unknown except by faith in what is written, must alike rejoice in the good hap that has preserved, for our better knowledge of his heart, these vivid and varied transcripts of his inner life during his latter years,—must alike be content to take the knowledge with such alloy of pain as the hapless turn of events rendered inevitable.

On a memorable occasion it was said of you by a great poet and prophet that, had he known of the circumstances of your unwearied attendance at the death-bed, he should have been tempted to add his "tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives;" and he uttered the wish *that the "unextinguished Spirit" of Keats might "plead against Oblivion" for your name. Were any such plea needed, the Spirit to prefer it, then unextinguished, is now known for inextinguishable; and whithersoever the name of "our Adonais" travels, there will yours also be found.*

This opportunity may not unfitly serve to record my gratitude for your ready kindness in affording me information on various points concerning your friend's life and death, and also for the permission to engrave your solemn portraiture of the beautiful countenance seen, as you only of all men living saw it, in its final agony.

H. B. F.

LETTERS TO FANNY BRAWNE

I TO X

SHANKLIN—WINCHESTER—WESTMINSTER.

fairest thief!
Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith
I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith
Thou art my executioner, and I feel
Loving and hatred, misery and weal,
Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,
And all my story that much passion slew me; . . .

LETTERS TO FANNY BRAWNE.

I.

Shanklin,
Isle of Wight, Thursday [1 July 1819].
[*Postmark*, Newport, 3 July 1819.]

My dearest Lady,

I am glad I had not an opportunity of sending off a Letter which I wrote for you on Tuesday night—'twas too much like one out of Ro[u]sseau's Heloise. I am more reasonable this morning. The morning is the only proper time for me to write to a beautiful Girl whom I love so much: for at night, when the lonely day has closed, and the lonely, silent, unmusical Chamber is waiting to receive me as into a Sepulchre, then believe me my passion gets entirely the sway, then I would not have you see those R[h]apsodies which I once thought it impossible I should ever give way to, and which I have often laughed at in another, for fear you should [think me [1]] either too unhappy or perhaps a little mad. I am now at a very pleasant Cottage window, looking onto a beautiful hilly country, with a glimpse of the sea; the morning is very fine. I do not know how elastic my spirit might be, what pleasure I might have in living here and breathing and wandering as free as a stag about this beautiful Coast if the remembrance of you did not weigh so upon me. I have never known any unalloy'd Happiness for many days together: the death or sickness of some one[1] has always spoilt my hours—and now when none such troubles oppress me, it is you must confess very hard that another sort of pain should haunt me. Ask yourself my love whether you are not very cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroyed my freedom. Will you confess this in the Letter you must write immediately and do all you can to console me in it—make it rich as a draught of poppies to intoxicate me—write the softest words and kiss them that I may at least touch my lips where yours have been. For myself I know not how to express my devotion to so fair a form: I want a brighter word than bright, a fairer word than fair. I almost wish we were butterflies and liv'd but three summer days—three such days with you I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever contain. But however selfish I may feel, I am sure I could never act selfishly: as I told you a day or two before I left Hampstead, I will never return to London if my Fate does not turn up Pam[2] or at least a Court-card. Though I could centre my Happiness in you, I cannot expect to engross your heart so entirely—indeed if I thought you felt as much for me as I do for you at this moment I do not think I could restrain myself from seeing you again tomorrow for the delight of one embrace. But no—I must live upon hope and Chance. In case of the worst that can happen, I shall still love you—but what hatred shall I have for another! Some lines I read the other day are continually ringing a peal in my ears:

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[1] These two words are wanting in the original. As regards laughter at lovers, see what Keats wrote to his brother George in the long Winchester letter (pages 7 and 8).

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[1] It will be remembered that Thomas Keats had died about seven months before the date of this letter.

[2] Ev'n mighty Pam, that kings and queens o'erthrew,
And mow'd down armies in the fights of Loo,
Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,
Falls undistinguish'd by the victor Spade!—
POPE'S *Rape of the Lock*, III, 61-4.

> To see those eyes I prize above mine own
> Darts favors on another—
> And those sweet lips (yielding immortal nectar)
> Be gently press'd by any but myself—
> Think, think Francesca, what a cursed thing
> It were beyond expression!

J.

Do write immediately. There is no Post from this Place, so you must address Post Office, Newport, Isle of Wight. I know before night I shall curse myself for having sent you so cold a Letter; yet it is better to do it as much in my senses as possible. Be as kind as the distance will permit to your

J. Keats.

Present my Compliments to your mother, my love to Margaret and best remembrances to your Brother—if you please so.

Fanny's father, Mr. Samuel Brawne, a gentleman of independent means, had died while she was still a child; and Mrs. Brawne resided at Hampstead, with her three children, Fanny, Samuel, and Margaret. Samuel, being next in age to Fanny, was a youth going to school in 1819; and Margaret was many years younger than her sister, being in fact a child at this time.

II.

July 8th.
[*Postmark*, Newport, 10 July 1819.]

My sweet Girl,

Your Letter gave me more delight than any thing in the world but yourself could do; indeed I am almost astonished that any absent one should have that luxurious power over my senses which I feel. Even when I am not thinking of you I receive your influence and a tenderer nature stealing[1] upon me. All my thoughts, my unhappiest days and nights, have I find not at all cured me of my love of Beauty, but made it so intense that I am miserable that you are not with me: or rather breathe in that dull sort of patience that cannot be called Life. I never knew before, what such a love as you have made me feel, was; I did not believe in it; my Fancy was afraid of it, lest it should burn me up. But if you will fully love me, though there may be some fire, 'twill not be more than we can bear when moistened and bedewed with Pleasures. You mention "horrid people" and ask me whether it depend upon them whether I see you again. Do understand me, my love, in this. I have so much of you in my heart that I must turn Mentor when I see a chance of harm befalling[2] you. I would never see any thing but Pleasure in your eyes, love on your lips, and Happiness in your steps. I would wish to see you among those amusements suitable to your inclinations and spirits; so that our loves might be a delight in the midst of Pleasures agreeable enough, rather than a resource from vexations and cares. But I doubt much, in case of the worst, whether I shall be philosopher enough to follow my own Lessons: if I saw my resolution give you a pain I could not. Why may I not speak of your Beauty, since without that I could never have lov'd you?—I cannot conceive any beginning of such love as I have for you but Beauty. There may be a sort of love for which, without the least sneer at it, I have the highest respect and can admire it in others: but it has not the richness, the bloom, the full form, the enchantment of love after my own heart. So let me speak of you[r] Beauty, though to my own endangering; if you could be so cruel to me as to try elsewhere its Power. You say you are afraid I shall think you do not love me—in saying this you make me ache the more to be near you. I am at the diligent use of my faculties here, I do not pass a day without sprawling some blank verse or tagging some rhymes; and here I must confess, that (since I am on that subject) I love you the more in that I believe you have liked me for my own sake and for nothing else. I have met with women whom I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a Novel. I have seen your Comet, and only wish it was a sign that poor Rice would get well whose illness makes him rather a melancholy companion: and the more so as so to conquer his feelings and hide them from me, with a forc'd Pun. I kiss'd your writing over in the hope you had indulg'd me by leaving a trace of honey. What was your dream? Tell it me and I will tell you the interpretation thereof.

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[1] In the original, *steeling*.

[2] In the original, *beffaling*.

Ever yours, my love!
John Keats.

Do not accuse me of delay—we have not here an opportunity of sending letters every day. Write speedily.

III.

Shanklin
Thursday Evening
[15 July 1819?]

My love,

I have been in so irritable a state of health these two or three last days, that I did not think I should be able to write this week. Not that I was so ill, but so much so as only to be capable of an unhealthy teasing letter. To night I am greatly recovered only to feel the languor I have felt after you touched with ardency. You say you perhaps might have made me better: you would then have made me worse: now you could quite effect a cure: What fee my sweet Physician would I not give you to do so. Do not call it folly, when I tell you I took your letter last night to bed with me. In the morning I found your name on the sealing wax obliterated. I was startled at the bad omen till I recollected that it must have happened in my dreams, and they you know fall out by contraries. You must have found out by this time I am a little given to bode ill like the raven; it is my misfortune not my fault; it has proceeded from the general tenor of the circumstances of my life, and

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This letter appears to belong between those of the 8th and 25th of July 1819; and of the two Thursdays between those dates it seems likelier that the 15th would be the one than that the letter should have been written so near the 25th as on the 22nd. The original having been mislaid, I have not been able to take the evidence of the postmark. It will be noticed that at the close he speaks of a weekly exchange of letters with Miss Brawne; and by placing this letter at the 15th this programme is pretty nearly realized so far as Keats's letters from the Isle of Wight are concerned.

rendered every event suspicious. However I will no more trouble either you or myself with sad Prophecies; though so far I am pleased at it as it has given me opportunity to love your disinterestedness towards me. I can be a raven no more; you and pleasure take possession of me at the same moment. I am afraid you have been unwell. If through me illness have touched you (but it must be with a very gentle hand) I must be selfish enough to feel a little glad at it. Will you forgive me this? I have been reading lately an oriental tale of a very beautiful color[1]—It is of a city of melancholy men, all made so by this circumstance. Through a series of adventures each one of them by turns reach some gardens of Paradise where they meet with a most enchanting Lady; and just as they are going to embrace her, she bids them shut their eyes—they shut them—and on opening their eyes again find themselves descending to the earth in a magic basket. The remembrance of this Lady and their delights lost beyond all recovery render them melancholy ever after. How I applied this to you, my dear; how I palpitated at it; how the certainty that you were in the same world with myself, and though as beautiful, not so talismanic as that Lady; how I could not bear you should be so you must believe because I swear it by yourself. I cannot say when I shall get a volume ready. I have three or four stories half done, but as I cannot write for the mere sake of the press, I am obliged to let them progress or lie still as my fancy chooses. By Christmas perhaps they may appear,[1] but I am not yet sure they ever will. 'Twill be no matter, for Poems are as common as newspapers and I do not see why it is a greater crime in me than in another to let the verses of an half-fledged brain tumble into the reading-rooms and drawing room windows. Rice has been better lately than usual: he is not suffering from any neglect of his parents who have for some years been able to appreciate him better than they did in his first youth, and are now devoted to his comfort. Tomorrow I shall, if my health continues to improve during the night, take a look fa[r]ther about the country, and spy at the parties about here who come hunting after the picturesque like beagles. It is astonishing how they raven down scenery like children do sweetmeats. The wondrous Chine here is a very great Lion: I wish I had as many guineas as there have been spy-glasses in it. I have been, I cannot tell why, in capital spirits this last hour. What reason? When I have to take my candle and retire to a lonely room, without the thought as I fall asleep, of seeing you tomorrow morning? or the next day, or the next—it takes on the appearance of impossibility and eternity—I will say a month—I will say I will see you in a month at most, though no one but yourself should see me; if it be but for an hour. I should not like to be so near you as London without being continually with you : after having once more kissed you Sweet I would rather be here alone at my task than in the bustle and hateful literary chitchat. Meantime you must write to me—as I will every week—for your letters keep me alive. My sweet Girl I cannot speak my love for you. Good night ! and

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[1] The story in question is one of the many derivatives from the Third Calender's Story in *The Thousand and One Nights* and the somewhat similar tale of "The Man who laughed not," included in the notes to Lane's *Arabian Nights* and in the text of Payne's magnificent version of the complete work. I am indebted to Dr. Reinhold Köhler, Librarian of the Grand-ducal Library of Weimar, for identifying the particular variant referred to by Keats, as the "Histoire de la Corbeille," in the *Nouveaux Contes Orientaux* of the Comte de Caylus. William Morris's beautiful poem "The Man who never laughed again," in *The Earthly Paradise*, has familiarized to English readers one variant of the legend.

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[1] It will of course be remembered that no such collection appeared until the following summer, when *Lamia, Isabella* &c. was published.

Ever yours

John Keats.

IV.

Sunday Night [25 July 1819].
[*Postmark*, 27 July 1819.[1]]

My sweet Girl,

I hope you did not blame me much for not obeying your request of a Letter on Saturday : we have had four in our small room playing at cards night and morning leaving me no undisturb'd opportunity to write. Now Rice and Martin[2] are gone I am at liberty. Brown to my sorrow confirms the account you give of your ill health. You cannot conceive how I ache to be with you : how I would die for one hour——for what is in the world ? I say you cannot conceive ; it is impossible you should look with such eyes upon me as I have upon you : it cannot be. Forgive me if I wander a little this evening, for I have been all day employ'd in a very abstr[a]ct Poem[3] and I am in deep love with you—two things which must excuse me. I have, believe me, not been an age in letting you take possession of me; the very first week I knew you I wrote myself your vassal; but burnt the Letter as the very next time I saw you I thought you manifested some dislike to me. If you should ever feel for Man at the first sight what I did for you, I am lost. Yet I should not quarrel with you, but hate myself if such a thing were to happen—only I should burst if the thing were not as fine as a Man as you are as a Woman. Perhaps I am too vehement, then fancy me on my knees, especially when I mention a part of you[r] Letter which hurt me; you say speaking of Mr. Severn "but you must be satisfied in knowing that I admired you much more than your friend." My dear love, I cannot believe there ever was or ever could be any thing to admire in me especially as far as sight goes—I cannot be admired, I am not a thing to be admired. You are, I love you; all I can bring you is a swooning admiration of your Beauty. I hold that place among Men which snub-nos'd brunettes with meeting eyebrows do among women—they are trash to me—unless I should find one among them with a fire in her heart like the one that burns in mine. You absorb me in spite of myself—you alone: for I look not forward with any pleasure to what is call'd being settled in the world; I tremble at domestic cares—yet for you I would meet them, though if it would leave you the happier I would rather die than do so. I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your Loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute. I hate the world: it batters too much the wings of my self-will, and would I could take a sweet poison from your lips to send me out of it. From no others would I take it. I am indeed astonish'd to find myself so careless of all cha[r]ms but yours—rememb[e]ring as I do the time when even a bit of ribband was a matter of interest with me. What softer words can I find for you after this—what it is I will not read. Nor will I say more here, but in a Postscript answer any thing else you may have mentioned in your Letter in so many words—for I am distracted with a thousand thoughts. I will imagine you Venus tonight and pray, pray, pray to your star like a He[a]then.

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[1] The word *Newport* is not stamped on this letter, as on Numbers I, II, and V ; but it is pretty evident that Keats and his friend were still at Shanklin.

[2] John Martin of Holles Street, Cavendish Square, of the firm of Rodwell and Martin. See note at page 7.

[3] This may have reference to some passage in either *Lamia* or *Hyperion*.

Your's ever, fair Star,
John Keats.

My seal is mark'd like a family table cloth with my Mother's initial F for Fanny:[1] put between my Father's initials. You will soon hear from me again. My respectful Comp[limen]ts to your Mother. Tell Margaret I'll send her a reef of best rocks and tell Sam[2] I will give him my light bay hunter if he will tie the Bishop hand and foot and pack him in a hamper and send him down for me to bathe him for his health with a Necklace of good snubby stones about his Neck.[3]

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[1] I am not aware of any other published record that this name belonged to Keats's mother, as well as his sister and his betrothed.

[2] Samuel Brawne, the brother of Fanny: see page 127.

[3] I am unable to obtain any positive explanation of the allusion made in this strange sentence. It is not, however, impossible that "the Bishop" was merely a nickname of some one in the Hampstead circle,—or perhaps the name of a dog.

V.

Shanklin, Thursday Night [5 August 1819].
[*Postmark*, Newport, 9 August 1819.]

My dear Girl,

You say you must not have any more such Letters as the last: I'll try that you shall not by running obstinate the other way. Indeed I have not fair play—I am not idle enough for proper downright love-letters—I leave this minute a scene in our Tragedy[1] and see you (think it not blasphemy) through the mist of Plots, speeches, counterplots and counterspeeches. The Lover[2] is madder than I am—I am nothing to him—he has a figure like the Statue of Meleager[3] and double distilled fire in his heart. Thank God for my diligence! were it not for that I should be miserable. I encourage it, and strive not to think of you—but when I have succeeded in doing so all day and as far as midnight, you return, as soon as this artificial excitement goes off, more severely from the fever I am left in. Upon my soul I cannot say what you could like me for. I do not think myself a fright any more than I do Mr. A., Mr. B., and Mr. C.—yet if I were a woman I should not like A. B. C. But enough of this. So you intend to hold me to my promise of seeing you in a short time. I shall keep it with as much sorrow as gladness: for I am not one of the Paladins of old who liv'd upon water grass and smiles for years together. What though would I not give tonight for the gratification of my eyes alone? This day week we shall move to Winchester; for I feel the want of a Library.[1] Brown will leave me there to pay a visit to Mr. Snook at Bedhampton: in his absence I will flit to you and back. I will stay very little while, for as I am in a train of writing now I fear to disturb it —let it have its course bad or good—in it I shall try my own strength and the public pulse. At Winchester I shall get your Letters more readily; and it being a cathedral City I shall have a pleasure always a great one to me when near a Cathedral, of reading them during the service up and down the Aisle.

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[1] The Tragedy referred to is, of course, *Otho the Great*, composed jointly by Keats and Charles Armitage Brown. See Volume II, pages 364-5.

[2] Few Lovers in literature are "anything" to Ludolph for sheer hysterical abandonment. Probably a great deal of the torture which that wretched prince is depicted as undergoing was painfully studied from experience.

[3] In the original, *Maleager*.

Friday Morning [6 August 1819].—Just as I had written thus far last night, Brown came down in his morning coat and nightcap, saying he had been refresh'd by a good sleep and was very hungry. I left him eating and went to bed, being too tired to enter into any discussions. You would delight very greatly in the walks about here; the Cliffs, woods, hills, sands, rocks &c. about here. They are however not so fine but I shall give them a hearty good bye to exchange them for my Cathedral.—Yet again I am not so tired of Scenery as to hate Switzerland. We might spend a pleasant year at Berne[2] or Zurich—if it should please Venus to hear my "Beseech thee to hear us O Goddess." And if she should hear, God forbid we should what people call, *settle*—turn into a pond, a stagnant Lethe—a vile crescent, row or buildings. Better be imprudent moveables than prudent fixtures. Open my Mouth at the Street door like the Lion's head at Venice to receive hateful cards, letters, messages. Go out and wither at tea parties; freeze at dinners; bake at dances; simmer at routs. No my love, trust yourself to me and I will find you nobler amusements, fortune favouring. I fear you will not receive this till Sunday or Monday: as the Irishman[1] would write do not in the mean while hate me. I long to be off for Winchester, for I begin to dislike the very door-posts here—the names, the pebbles. You ask after my health, not telling me whether you are better. I am quite well. You going out is no proof that you are: how is it? Late hours will do you great harm. What fairing is it? I was alone for a couple of days while Brown went gadding over the country with his ancient knapsack. Now I like his society as well as any Man's, yet regretted his return—it broke in upon me like a Thunderbolt. I had got in a dream among my Books—really luxuriating in a solitude and silence you alone should have disturb'd.

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[1] He did not find one; for, in his letter to Haydon from Winchester, dated the 3rd of October 1819, he says: "I came to this place in the hopes of meeting with a Library, but was disappointed." See page 38 of this volume.

[2] Not *Rome*, as printed in the memoir prefixed to the Aldine Edition of Keats, at page xxv of which there is a reference to this letter.

Your ever affectionate
John Keats.

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[1] In the original, *irishman* with a small *i*. This must not be hastily regarded as "another injustice to Ireland," seeing that Keats, though very lavish of his capitals in common nouns, frequently wrote proper names without them—occasionally spelt even *God* with a small *g*, in the very next letter *Romeo* with a small *r*, and in Letter Number VII *French* with a small *f*.

VI.

Winchester, August 17th.[1]
[*Postmark*, 16 August 1819.]

My dear Girl—what shall I say for myself? I have been here four days and not yet written you—'tis true I have had many teasing letters of business to dismiss—and I have been in the Claws, like a serpent in an Eagle's, of the last act of our Tragedy.[2] This is no excuse; I know it; I do not presume to offer it. I have no right either to ask a speedy answer to let me know how lenient you are—I must remain some days in a Mist—I see you through a Mist: as I daresay you do me by this time. Believe in the first Letters I wrote you: I assure you I felt as I wrote—I could not write so now. The thousand images I have had pass through my brain—my uneasy spirits—my unguess'd fate—all spread as a veil between me and you. Remember I have had no idle leisure to brood over you—'tis well perhaps I have not. I could not have endured the throng of jealousies that used to haunt me before I had plunged so deeply into imaginary interests. I would fain, as my sails are set, sail on without an interruption for a Brace of Months longer—I am in complete cue—in the fever; and shall in these four Months do an immense deal. This Page as my eye skims over it I see is excessively unloverlike and ungallant—I cannot help it—I am no officer in yawning quarters; no Parson-Romeo.[1] My Mind is heap'd to the full; stuff'd like a cricket ball—if I strive to fill it more it would burst. I know the generality[2] of women would hate me for this; that I should have so unsoften'd, so hard a Mind as to forget them; forget the brightest realities for the dull imaginations of my own Brain. But I conjure you to give it a fair thinking; and ask yourself whether 'tis not better to explain my feelings to you, than write artificial Passion.—Besides, you would see through it. It would be vain to strive to deceive you. 'Tis harsh, harsh, I know it. My heart seems now made of iron—I could not write a proper answer to an invitation to Idalia. You are my Judge: my forehead is on the ground. You seem offended at a little simple innocent childish playfulness in my last. I did not seriously mean to say that you were endeavouring to make me keep my promise. I beg your pardon for it. 'Tis but *just* you[r] Pride should take the alarm—*seriously*. You say I may do as I please—I do not think with any conscience I can; my cash resources are for the present stopp'd; I fear for some time. I spend no money, but it increases my debts. I have all my life thought very little of these matters—they seem not to belong to me. It may be a proud sentence; but by Heaven I am as entirely above all matters of interest as the Sun is above the Earth—and though of my own money I should be careless; of my Friends' I must be spare. You see how I go on—like so many strokes of a hammer. I cannot help it—I am impell'd, driven to it. I am not happy enough for silken Phrases, and silver sentences. I can no more use soothing words to you than if I were at this moment engaged in a charge of Cavalry. Then you will say I should not write at all.—Should I not? This Winchester is a fine place: a beautiful Cathedral and many other ancient building[s] in the Environs. The little coffin of a room at Shanklin is changed for a large room, where I can promenade at my pleasure—looks out onto a beautiful—blank side of a house. It is strange I should like it better than the view of the sea from our window at Shanklin. I began to hate the very posts there—the voice of the old Lady over the way was getting a great Plague. The Fisherman's face never altered any more than our black teapot—the [k]nob however was knock'd off to my little relief. I am getting a great dislike of the picturesque; and can only relish it over again by seeing you enjoy it. One of the pleasantest things I have seen lately was at Cowes. The Regent in his Yatch [1] (I think they spell it) was anchored opposite [2]—a beautiful vessel—and all the Yatchs and boats on the coast were passing and repassing it; and circuiting [3] and tacking about it in every direction—I never beheld anything so silent, light, and graceful.—As we pass'd over to Southampton, there was nearly an accident. There came by a Boat, well mann'd, with t[w]o naval officers at the stern.

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[1] The discrepancy between the date written by Keats and that given in the postmark is curious as a comment on his statement (Volume III, page 270) that he never knew the date: "It is some days since I wrote the last page, but I never know..."

[2] Act V of *Otho the Great* was, it will be remembered, wholly Keats's, as regards both matter and manner, and not, like the rest, a joint production schemed out by Brown and executed by Keats.

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[1] In the original *Parson-romeo*, with a small *r*; but, although the proper name *Romeo* is converted to a sort of common-noun use, I should not think the small *r* was any more intentional than the small *i* for *Irishman* at page 138.

[2] In the original, *generallity*.

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[1] This indefensible orthography was not in Keats's time wholly unauthorized. To substitute the preferable spelling *yacht* would be to represent Keats as thinking what he did not think.

[2] In the original, *oppoisite*.

[3] What Keats wrote was *curcuiting*; but there can be no reasonable doubt that *circuiting* was the word intended.

Our Bow-lines took the top of their little mast and snapped it off close by the bo[a]rd. Had the mast been a little stouter they would have been upset. In so trifling an event I could not help admiring our seamen—neither officer nor man in the whole Boat mov'd a muscle—they scarcely notic'd it even with words. Forgive me for this flint-worded Letter, and believe and see that I cannot think of you without some sort of energy—though mal à propos. Even as I leave off it seems to me that a few more moments' thought of you would uncrystallize and dissolve me. I must not give way to it—but turn to my writing again—if I fail I shall die hard. O my love, your lips are growing sweet again to my fancy—I must forget them. Ever your affectionate

Keats.

VII.

Fleet Street,[1] Monday Morn [13 September 1819].
[*Postmark*, Lombard Street, 14 September 1819.]

My dear Girl,

I have been hurried to town by a Letter from my brother George; it is not of the brightest intelligence. Am I mad or not? I came by the Friday night coach and have not yet been to Ham[p]stead. Upon my soul it is not my fault. I cannot resolve to mix any pleasure with my days: they go one like another, undistinguishable. If I were to see you today it would destroy the half comfortable sullenness I enjoy at present into dow[n]right perplexities. I love you too much to venture to Hampstead, I feel it is not paying a visit, but venturing into a fire. *Que feraije?* as the French[1] novel writers say in fun, and I in earnest: really what can I do? Knowing well that my life must be passed in fatigue and trouble, I have been endeavouring to wean myself from you: for to myself alone what can be much of a misery? As far as they regard myself I can despise all events: but I cannot cease to love you. This morning I scarcely know what I am doing. I am going to Walthamstow. I shall return to Winchester tomorrow;[2] whence you shall hear from me in a few days. I am a Coward, I cannot bear the pain of being happy: 'tis out of the question: I must admit no thought of it.

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[1] Written, I presume, from the house of his friends and publishers, Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, Number 93, Fleet Street.

Yours ever affectionately
John Keats.

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[1] In the original, *french*, with a small *f*.

[2] He must, I think, have waited till the day after: he would seem to have gone to Winchester again on the 15th of September. See page 6.

VIII.

College Street.[1]
[*Postmark*, 11 October 1819.]

My sweet Girl,

I am living today in yesterday: I was in a complete fa[s]cination all day. I feel myself at your mercy. Write me ever so few lines and tell me[2] you will never for ever be less kind to me than yesterday.—You dazzled me. There is nothing in the world so bright and delicate. When Brown came out with that seemingly true story against me last night, I felt it would be death to me if you ever had believed it—though against any one else I could muster up my obstinacy. Before I knew Brown could disprove it I was for the moment more miserable. When shall we pass a day alone? I have had a thousand kisses, for which with my whole soul I thank love—but if you should deny me the thousand and first—'twould put me to the proof how great a misery I could live through. If you should ever carry your threat yesterday into execution—believe me 'tis not my pride, my vanity or any petty passion would torment me—really 'twould hurt my heart—I could not bear it. I have seen Mrs. Dilke this morning; she says she will come with me any fine day.

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[1] It would seem to have been in this street that Mr. Dilke obtained for Keats the rooms which the poet asked him to find in the letter of the 1st of October, from Winchester, given at pages 34-5 of this volume. How long Keats remained in those rooms I have been unable to determine, to a day; but in Letter Number CXVI, headed "Wentworth Place," and postmarked the 16th of October 1819 (pages 40-1 of this volume) he speaks of having "returned to Hampstead," after lodging "two or three days" "in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Dilke." In Letter Number X of this series he writes from Great Smith Street (the address of the Dilkes) of his *purpose* to live at Hampstead. I suppose the "three days dream" there referred to was a visit to Mrs. Brawne's house, from which he proceeded to Mrs. Dilke's—there to come to a final resolution of living at Hampstead.

[2] Keats wrote *tell you you will* &c.; but here again there can be no doubt what he meant.

Ever yours
John Keats.

Ah hertè mine!

IX.

25 College Street.
[*Postmark*, 13 October 1819.]

My dearest Girl,

This moment I have set myself to copy some verses out fair. I cannot proceed with any degree of content. I must write you a line or two and see if that will assist in dismissing you from my Mind for ever so short a time. Upon my Soul I can think of nothing else. The time is passed when I had power to advise and warn you against the unpromising morning of my Life. My love has made me selfish. I cannot exist without you. I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again—my Life seems to stop there—I see no further. You have absorb'd me. I have a sensation at the present moment as though I was dissolving—I should be exquisitely miserable without the hope of soon seeing you. I should be afraid to separate myself far from you. My sweet Fanny, will your heart never change? My love, will it? I have no limit now to my love...... You[r] note came in just here. I cannot be happier away from you. 'Tis richer than an Argosy of Pearles. Do not threat me even in jest. I have been astonished that Men could die Martyrs for religion—I have shudder'd at it. I shudder no more —I could be martyr'd for my Religion—Love is my religion—I could die for that. I could die for you. My Creed is Love and you are its only tenet. You have ravish'd me away by a Power I cannot resist; and yet I could resist till I saw you; and even since I have seen you I have endeavoured often "to reason against the reasons of my Love." I can do that no more—the pain would be too great. My love is selfish. I cannot breathe without you.

Yours for ever
John Keats.

X.

Great Smith Street,
Tuesday Morn.
[*Postmark*, College Street, 19 October 1819.]

My sweet Fanny,

On awakening from my three days dream (" I cry to dream again ") I find one and another astonish'd at my idleness and thoughtlessness. I was miserable last night—the morning is always restorative. I must be busy, or try to be so. I have several things to speak to you of tomorrow morning. Mrs. Dilke I should think will tell you that I purpose living at Hampstead. I must impose chains upon myself. I shall be able to do nothing. I sho[u]ld like to cast the die for Love or

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(x) See foot-note at page 144. Between this and the next letter there is a gap of several months, during which Keats was living close to Miss Brawne.

death. I have no Patience with any thing else—if you ever intend to be cruel to me as you say in jest now but perhaps may sometimes be in earnest, be so now—and I will—my mind is in a tremble, I cannot tell what I am writing.

Ever my love yours
John Keats.

LETTERS TO FANNY BRAWNE

XI to XXXIII

WENTWORTH PLACE

Where wert thou mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness?

LETTERS TO FANNY BRAWNE.

XI.

Dearest Fanny, I shall send this the moment you return. They say I must remain confined to this room for some time. The consciousness that you love me will make a pleasant prison of the house next to yours. You must come and see me frequently: this evening, without fail—when you must not mind about my speaking in a low tone for I am ordered to do so though I *can* speak out.

Yours ever
sweetest love.—
turn over J. Keats.

Perhaps your Mother is not at home and so you must wait till she comes. You must see me tonight and let me hear[1] you promise to come tomorrow.

Brown told me you were all out. I have been looking for the stage the whole afternoon. Had I known this I could not have remain'd so silent all day.

On being taken ill on the 3rd of February 1820 Keats was again reduced to letter-writing as a means of communication with Miss Brawne. I should think it probable that the date of this letter was the 4th of February, the day after that on which the illness began. This and the letters following it, up to Number XXXIII, would appear to have been written at Brown's house in Wentworth Place and sent by hand to Mrs. Brawne's, the "sister-house."

[1] **In the original, *have* stands cancelled in favour of *hear*.**

XII.

My dearest Girl,

If illness makes such an agreeable variety in the manner of your eyes I should wish you sometimes to be ill. I wish I had read your note before you went last night that I might have assured you how far I was from suspecting any coldness. You had a just right to be a little silent to one who speaks so plainly to you. You must believe—you shall, you will—that I can do nothing, say nothing, think nothing of you but what has its spring in the Love which has so long been my pleasure and torment. On the night I was taken ill—when so violent a rush of blood came to my Lungs that I felt nearly suffocated—I assure you I felt it possible I might not survive, and at that moment though[t] of nothing but you. When I said to Brown "this is unfortunate"[1] I thought of you. 'Tis true that since the first two or three days other subjects have entered my head.[2] I shall be looking forward to Health and the Spring and a regular routine of our old Walks.

Your affectionate

J. K.

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[1] It may be that consideration for his correspondent induced this moderation of speech: presumably the scene here referred to is that so graphically given by Lord Houghton. See the extract from Volume II of the *Life*, *Letters* &c. given at page 58 of the present volume,—where we read, not that he merely "felt it possible" he "might not survive," but that he said to his friend, "I know the colour of that blood,—it is arterial blood—I cannot be deceived in that colour; that drop is my death-warrant. I must die."

[2] This sentence indicates the lapse of perhaps about a week from the 3rd of February 1820.

XIII.

My sweet love, I shall wait patiently till tomorrow before I see you, and in the mean time, if there is any need of such a thing, assure you by your Beauty, that whenever I have at any time written on a certain unpleasant subject, it has been with your welfare impress'd upon my mind. How hurt I should have been had you ever acceded to what is, notwithstanding, very reasonable! How much the more do I love you from the general result! In my present state of Health I feel too much separated from you and could almost speak to you in the words of Lorenzo's Ghost to Isabella[1]

> Your Beauty grows upon me and I feel
> A greater love through all my essence steal.

My greatest torment since I have known you has been the fear of you being a little inclined to the Cressid; but that suspicion I dismiss utterly and remain happy in the surety of your Love, which I assure you is as much a wonder to me as a delight. Send me the words "Good night" to put under my pillow.

Dearest Fanny,
Your affectionate
J. K.

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[1] See Volume II, page 59.

XIV.

My dearest Girl,

According to all appearances I am to be separated from you as much as possible. How I shall be able to bear it, or whether it will not be worse than your presence now and then, I cannot tell. I must be patient, and in the mean time you must think of it as little as possible. Let me not longer detain you from going to Town—there may be no end to this imprisoning of you. Perhaps you had better not come before tomorrow evening: send me however without fail a good night.

You know our situation——what hope is there if I should be recovered ever so soon—my very health will[1] not suffer me to make any great exertion. I am recommended not even to read poetry, much less write it. I wish I had even a little hope. I cannot say forget me —but I would mention that there are impossibilities in the world. No more of this. I am not strong enough to be weaned—take no notice of it in your good night.

Happen what may I shall ever be my dearest Love

Your affectionate

J. K.

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[1] In the original, *with* is written instead of *will*.

XV.

My dearest Girl, how could it ever have been my wish to forget you? how could I have said such a thing? The utmost stretch my mind has been capable of was to endeavour to forget you for your own sake seeing what a chance[1] there was of my remaining in a precarious state of health. I would have borne it as I would bear death if fate was in that humour: but I should as soon think of choosing to die as to part from you. Believe too my Love that our friends think and speak for the best, and if their best is not our best it is not their fault. When I am better I will speak with you at large on these subjects, if there is any occasion—I think there is none. I am rather nervous today perhaps from being a little recovered and suffering my mind to take little excursions beyond the doors and windows. I take it for a good sign, but as it must not be encouraged you had better delay seeing me till tomorrow. Do not take the trouble of writing much: merely send me my good night.

Remember me to your Mother and Margaret.

Your affectionate

J. K.

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[1] Keats wrote here *change* instead of *chance*.

XVI.

My dearest Fanny,

Then all we have to do is to be patient. Whatever violence I may sometimes do myself by hinting at what would appear to any one but ourselves a matter of necessity, I do not think I could bear any approach of a thought of losing you. I slept well last night, but cannot say that I improve very fast. I shall expect you tomorrow, for it is certainly better that I should see you seldom. Let me have your good night.

Your affectionate
J. K.

Friends both of Keats and of Miss Brawne naturally regarded the engagement as an imprudent one from the first; and the entire break-down of the poet's health must have brought all possible prudential considerations home very poignantly to his own mind as well as the minds of his friends. Some hint beyond what is expressed in the last letter had perhaps fallen from Keats in conversation,—some hint of readiness at all costs to release Miss Brawne from her engagement if she on her part were prepared to follow prudent counsels and accept such release.

XVII.

My dearest Fanny,

I read your note in bed last night, and that might be the reason of my sleeping so much better. I think Mr. Brown[1] is right in supposing you may stop too long with me, so very nervous as I am. Send me every evening a written Good night. If you come for a few minutes about six it may be the best time. Should you ever fancy me too low-spirited I must warn you to ascribe it to the medicine I am at present taking which is of a nerve-shaking nature. I shall impute any depression I may experience to this cause. I have been writing with a vile old pen the whole week, which is excessively ungallant. The fault is in the Quill: I have mended it and still it is very much inclin'd to make blind es. However these last lines are in a much better style of penmanship, thof a little disfigured by the smear of black currant jelly; which has made a little mark on one of the Pages of Brown's Ben Jonson, the very best book he has. I have lick'd it but it remains very purple. I did not know whether to say purple or blue so in the mixture of the thought wrote purplue which may be an excellent name for a colour made up of those two, and would suit well to start next spring. Be very careful of open doors and windows and going without your duffle grey. God bless you Love!

J. Keats.

P.S. I am sitting in the back room. Remember me to your Mother.

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[1] This coupling of Brown's name with ideas of Fanny's absence or presence seems to be a curiously faint indication of a painful phase of feeling more fully developed in the sequel. See Letters XXII, XXV, XXVII, XXXVII, and XXXIX.

XVIII.

My dear Fanny,

Do not let your mother suppose that you hurt me by writing at night. For some reason or other your last night's note was not so treasureable as former ones. I would fain that you call me *Love* still. To see you happy and in high spirits[1] is a great consolation to me —still let me believe that you are not half so happy as my restoration would make you. I am nervous, I own, and may think myself worse than I really am; if so you must indulge me, and pamper with that sort of tenderness you have manifested towards me in different Letters. My sweet creature when I look back upon the pains and torments I have suffer'd for you from the day I left you to go to the Isle[2] of Wight; the ecstasies in which I have pass'd some days and the miseries in their turn, I wonder the more at the Beauty which has kept up the spell so fervently. When I send this round I shall be in the front parlour watching to see you show yourself for a minute in the garden. How illness stands as a barrier betwixt me and you! Even if I was well——I must make myself as good a Philosopher as possible. Now I have had opportunities of passing nights anxious and awake I have found other thoughts intrude upon me. "If I should die," said I to myself, "I have left no immortal work behind me—nothing to make my friends proud of my memory—but I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remember'd." Thoughts like these came very feebly whilst I was in health and every pulse beat for you—now you divide with this (may *I* say it?) "last infirmity of noble minds" [1] all my reflection.

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[1] Miss Brawne had much natural pride and buoyancy, and was quite capable of affecting higher spirits and less concern than she really felt. But as to the genuineness of her attachment to Keats some of those who knew her personally have no doubt whatever.

[2] In the original, *isle*, with a small *i*, and in the same line *extasies*.

God bless you, Love.
J. Keats.

XIX.

My dearest Girl,

You spoke of having been unwell in your last note: have you recover'd? That note has been a great delight to me. I am stronger than I was: the Doctors say there is very little the matter with me, but I cannot believe them till the weight and tightness of my Chest is mitigated. I will not indulge or pain myself by complaining of my long separation from you. God alone knows whether I am destined to taste of happiness with you: at all events I myself know thus much, that I consider it no mean Happiness to have lov'd you thus far—if it is to be no further I shall not be unthankful—if I am to recover, the day of my recovery shall see me by your side from which nothing shall separate me. If well you are the only medicine that can keep me so.

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[1] Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life.

Lycidas, 70-6.

Perhaps, aye surely, I am writing in too depress'd a state of mind—ask your Mother to come and see me—she will bring you a better account than mine.

Ever your affectionate
John Keats.

XX.

My dearest Girl,

Indeed I will not deceive you with respect to my Health. This is the fact as far as I know. I have been confined three weeks[1] and am not yet well—this proves that there is something wrong about me which my constitution will either conquer or give way to. Let us hope for the best. Do you hear the Thrush singing over the field? I think it is a sign of mild weather—so much the better for me. Like all Sinners now I am ill I philosophize, aye out of my attachment to every thing, Trees, flowers, Thrushes, Spring, Summer, Claret, &c. &c.—aye every thing but you.—My sister would be glad of my company a little longer. That Thrush is a fine fellow. I hope he was fortunate in his choice this year. Do not send any more of my Books home. I have a great pleasure in the thought of you looking on them.

Ever yours
my sweet Fanny
J. K.

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[1] If we are to take these words literally, this letter brings us to the 24th of February 1820.

XXI.

My dearest Girl,

I continue much the same as usual, I think a little better. My spirits are better also, and consequently I am more resign'd to my confinement. I dare not think of you much or write much to you. Remember me to all.

Ever your affectionate
John Keats.

XXII.

My dear Fanny,

I think you had better not make any long stay with me when Mr. Brown is at home. Whenever he goes out you may bring your work. You will have a pleasant walk today. I shall see you pass. I shall follow you with my eyes over the Heath. Will you come towards evening instead of before dinner? When you are gone, 'tis past—if you do not come till the evening I have something to look forward to all day. Come round to my window for a moment when you have read this. Thank your Mother, for the preserves, for me. The raspberry will be too sweet not having any acid; therefore as you are so good a girl I shall make you a present of it. Good bye

My sweet Love!
J. Keats.

XXIII.

My dearest Fanny,

The power of your benediction is of not so weak a nature as to pass from the ring in four and twenty hours—it is like a sacred Chalice once consecrated and ever consecrate. I shall kiss your name and mine where your Lips have been— Lips! why should a poor prisoner as I am talk about such things? Thank God, though I hold them the dearest pleasures in the universe, I have a consolation independent of them in the certainty of your affection. I could write a song in the style of Tom Moore's Pathetic about Memory if that would be any relief to me. No 'twould not. I will be as obstinate as a Robin, I will not sing in a cage. Health is my expected heaven and you are the Houri——this word I

It can scarcely be doubtful that the particular poem of Moore's to which allusion is here made is the charming song without a title, headed with the words from Aristotle's Rhetoric (Book III, Chapter 4), λιβανοτῳ εικασεν, ὁτι απολλυμενον ευφραινει. It belonged originally to the collection of *Epistles*, *Odes* &c., and was placed among the *Odes to Nea, written at Bermuda.* No doubt the poem was much more generally known in Keats's days than it is now; and I shall be pardoned for placing it here:—

There's not a look, a word of thine
  My soul hath e'er forgot;
Thou ne'er hast bid a ringlet shine,
Nor given thy locks one graceful twine,
  Which I remember not!

There never yet a murmur fell
  From that beguiling tongue,
Which did not, with a lingering spell,
Upon my charmed senses dwell,
  Like something Heaven had sung!

believe is both singular and plural—if only plural, never mind—you are a thousand of them.

Ever yours affectionately
my dearest,
J. K.

You had better not come to day.

XXIV.

My dearest Love,

You must not stop so long in the cold—I have been suspecting that window to be open.—You[r] note half-cured me. When I want some more oranges I will tell you—these are just à propos. I am kept from food so feel rather weak—otherwise very well. Pray do not stop so long upstairs—it makes me uneasy—come every now and then and stop a half minute. Remember me to your Mother.

Your ever affectionate
J. Keats.

Ah ! that I could, at once, forget
All, all that haunts me so—
And yet, thou witching girl !—and yet,
To die were sweeter than to let
The loved remembrance go !

No, if this slighted heart must see
Its faithful pulse decay,
Oh ! let it die, remembering thee,
And, like the burnt aroma, be
Consumed in sweets away !

XXV.

Sweetest Fanny,

You fear, sometimes, I do not love you so much as you wish? My dear Girl I love you ever and ever and without reserve. The more I have known you the more have I lov'd. In every way—even my jealousies have been agonies of Love, in the hottest fit I ever had I would have died for you. I have vex'd you too much. But for Love! Can I help it? You are always new. The last of your kisses was ever the sweetest; the last smile the brightest; the last movement the gracefullest. When you pass'd my window home yesterday, I was fill'd with as much admiration as if I had then seen you for the first time. You uttered a half complaint once that I only lov'd your Beauty.[1] Have I nothing else then to love in you but that? Do not I see a heart naturally furnish'd with wings imprison itself with me? No ill prospect has been able to turn your thoughts a moment from me. This perhaps should be as much a subject of sorrow as joy—but I will not talk of that. Even if you did not love me I could not help an entire devotion to you: how much more deeply then must I feel for you knowing you love me. My Mind has been the most discontented and restless one that ever was put into a body too small for it. I never felt my Mind repose upon anything with complete and undistracted enjoyment—upon no person but you. When you are in the room my thoughts never fly out of window: you always concentrate my whole senses. The anxiety shown about our Loves in your last note is an immense pleasure to me: however you must not suffer such speculations to molest you any more: nor will I any more believe you can have the least pique against me. Brown is gone out—but here is Mrs. Wylie[1]—when she is gone I shall be awake for you.—Remembrances to your Mother.

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[1] See the letter of the 8th of July 1819 from the Isle of Wight (page 129) in which Keats answers some remarks of Miss Brawne's on this subject.

Your affectionate

J. Keats.

XXVI.

My dearest Fanny,

I had a better night last night than I have had since my attack, and this morning I am the same as when you saw me. I have been turning over two volumes of Letters written between Rousseau and two Ladies in the perplexed strain of mingled finesse and sentiment in which the Ladies and gentlemen of those days were so clever, and which is still prevalent among Ladies of this Country who live in a state of re[a]soning romance. The likeness however only extends to the mannerism, not to the dexterity. What would Rousseau have said at seeing our little correspondence! What would his Ladies have said! I don't care much—I would sooner have Shakspeare's opinion about the matter. The common gossiping of washerwomen must be less disgusting than the continual and eternal fence and attack of Rousseau and these sublime Petticoats. One calls herself Clara and her friend Julia, two of Ro[u]sseau's heroines—they all[1] the same time christen poor Jean Jacques St. Preux—who is the pure cavalier of his famous novel. Thank God I am born in England with our own great Men before my eyes. Thank God that you are fair and can love me without being Letter-written and sentimentaliz'd into it.—Mr. Barry Cornwall has sent me another Book, his first, with a polite note.[2] I must do what I can to make him sensible of the esteem I have for his kindness. If this north east would take a turn it would be so much the better for me. Good bye, my love, my dear love, my beauty—

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[1] Mrs. Wylie, it will be remembered, was George Keats's Mother-in-law. The significant *but* indicates that the absence of Brown was still, as was natural, more or less a condition of the presence of Miss Brawne. That Keats had, however, or thought he had, some reason for this condition, beyond the mere delicacy of lovers, is dimly shadowed by the cold *My dear Fanny* with which in Letter XXII the condition was first expressly prescribed, and more than shadowed by the agonized expression of a morbid sensibility in Letters XXXVII and XXXIX. Probably a man in sound health would have found the cause trivial enough.

love me for ever.

J. K.

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[1] So in the original; but probably *at* was the word Keats meant to write.

[2] The reference to Barry Cornwall indicates that this letter was written about the 23rd or 25th of February 1820; for in the letter to John Hamilton Reynolds of that time (see page 67), Keats recounts this same affair of Procter's first book as having happened "yesterday." He lets Reynolds very clearly understand that the book was by no means so agreeable to him as the "kindness."

XXVII.

My dear Fanny,

I am much better this morning than I was a week ago: indeed I improve a little every day. I rely upon taking a walk with you upon the first of May: in the mean time undergoing a babylonish captivity I shall not be jew enough to hang up my harp upon a willow, but rather endeavour to clear up my arrears in versifying, and with returning health begin upon something new: pursuant to which resolution it will be necessary to have my or rather Taylor's manuscript,[1] which you, if you please, will send by my Messenger either today or tomorrow. Is Mr. D.[2] with you today? You appeared very much fatigued last night: you must look a little brighter this morning. I shall not suffer my little girl ever to be obscured like glass breath'd upon, but always bright as it is her *nature to.* Feeding upon sham victuals and sitting by the fire will completely annul me. I have no need of an enchanted wax figure to duplicate me, for I am melting in my proper person before the fire.[3] If you meet with anything better (worse) than common in your Magazines let me see it.

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[1] Presumably the manuscript of *Lamia, Isabella* &c. (the volume containing *Hyperion*, and most of Keats's finest work), which was then about to be sent to press.

[2] I suppose the reference is to Mr. Dilke.

[3] The superstition that a person's death might be compassed by melting a waxen image of the person before a fire was not so well known in Keats's day as now. It is just such a phase of imaginative psychology as would have appealed powerfully to the mind of the author of *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *The Eve of St. Mark*; and it is noteworthy that Dante Gabriel Rossetti embodied this superstition in one of his finest poems, *Sister Helen*, memorable alike for its forcible expression of the terrible and for its artistic beauty.

Good bye my sweetest Girl.

J. K.

XXVIII.

My dearest Fanny, whe[ne]ver you know me to be alone, come, no matter what day. Why will you go out this weather? I shall not fatigue myself with writing too much I promise you. Brown says I am getting stouter.[1] I rest well and from last night do not remember any thing horrid in my dream, which is a capital symptom, for any organic derangement always occasions a Phantasmagoria. It will be a nice idle amusement to hunt after a motto for my Book which I will have if lucky enough to hit upon a fit one—not intending to write a preface.[2] I fear I am too late with my note—you are gone out—you will be as cold as a topsail in a north latitude—I advise you to furl yourself and come in a doors.

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[1] This statement and a general similarity of tone induce the belief that this letter and the preceding one were written about the same time as that to Mr. Dilke bearing the postmark, "Hampstead, March 4, 1820," given at pages 70-2 of this volume. In that letter Keats cites his friend Brown as having said that he had "picked up a little flesh," and he refers to his "being under an interdict with respect to animal food, living upon pseudo-victuals,"—just as in Letter XXVII he speaks to Miss Brawne of his "feeding upon sham victuals." In the letter to Mr. Dilke he says: "If I can keep off inflammation for the next six weeks, I trust I shall do very well." In Letter XXVII he expresses to Miss Brawne the hope that he may go out for a walk with her on the 1st of May. If these correspondences may be trusted, we are now dealing with letters of the first week in March.

[2] There was neither preface nor motto, either to the volume as a whole or to any one of the poems composing it. See Volume II of this edition, pages 1 to 177.

Good bye Love.

J. K.

XXIX.

My dearest Fanny, I slept well last night and am no worse this morning for it. Day by day if I am not deceived I get a more unrestrain'd use of my Chest. The nearer a racer gets to the Goal the more his anxiety becomes; so I lingering upon the borders of health feel my impatience increase. Perhaps on your account I have imagined my illness more serious than it is: how horrid was the chance of slipping into the ground instead of into your arms—the difference is amazing Love. Death must come at last; Man must die, as Shallow says[1]; but before that is my fate I fain[2] would try what more pleasures than you have given, so sweet a creature as you can give. Let me have another op[p]ortunity of years before me and I will not die without being remember'd. Take care of yourself dear that we may both be well in the Summer. I do not at all fatigue myself with writing, having merely to put a line or two here and there, a Task which would worry a stout state of the body and mind, but which just suits me as I can do no more.

Your affectionate

J. K.

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[1] "Certain, 't is certain; very sure, very sure: death, as the Psalmist saith, is certain to all; all shall die. How a good yoke of bullocks at Stamford fair?"

Second Part of King Henry IV, Act III, Scene II.

[2] In the original, *feign*.

XXX.

My dearest Fanny,

Though I shall see you in so short a time I cannot forbear sending you a few lines. You say I did not give you yesterday a minute account of my health. To-day I have left off the Medicine which I took to keep the pulse down and I find I can do very well without it, which is a very favourable sign, as it shows there is no inflammation remaining. You think I may be wearied at night you say: it is my best time; I am at my best about eight o'Clock. I received a Note from Mr. Procter[1] today. He says he cannot pay me a visit this weather as he is fearful of an inflammation in the Chest. What a horrid climate this is? or what careless inhabitants it has? You are one of them. My dear girl do not make a joke of it: do not expose yourself to the cold. There's the Thrush again—I can't afford it—he'll run me up a pretty Bill for Music—besides he ought to know I deal at Clementi's. How can you bear so long an imprisonment at Hampstead? I shall always remember it with all the gusto that a monopolizing carle should. I could build an Altar to you for it.

Your affectionate

J. K.

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[1] Misspelt *Proctor* in the original. Probably Procter's note was a rejoinder to what Keats had written "to make him sensible of the esteem" he had "for his kindness" in sending *Marcian Colonna* &c. (see page 166).

XXXI.

My dearest Girl,

As, from the last part of my note you must see how gratified I have been by your remaining at home, you might perhaps conceive that I was equally bias'd the other way by your going to Town, I cannot be easy tonight without telling you you would be wrong to suppose so. Though I am pleased with the one, I am not displeased with the other. How do I dare to write in this manner about my pleasures and displeasures? I will tho' whilst I am an invalid, in spite of you. Good night, Love!

J. K.

XXXII.

My dearest Girl,

In consequence of our company I suppose I shall not see you before tomorrow. I am much better today —indeed all I have to complain of is want of strength and a little tightness in the Chest. I envied Sam's walk with you today; which I will not do again as I may get very tired of envying. I imagine you now sitting in your new black dress which I like so much and if I were a little less selfish and more enthusiastic[1] I should run round and surprise you with a knock at the door. I fear I am too prudent for a dying kind of Lover. Yet, there is a great difference between going off in warm blood like Romeo, and making one's exit like a frog in a frost. I had nothing particular to say today, but not intending that there shall be any interruption to our correspondence (which at some future time I propose offering to Murray) I write something.[1] God bless you my sweet Love! Illness is a long lane, but I see you at the end of it, and shall mend my pace as well as possible.

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[1] In the original, *enthousiastic*.

J. K.

XXXIII.

Dear Girl,

Yesterday you must have thought me worse than I really was. I assure you there was nothing but regret at being obliged to forego an embrace which has so many times been the highest gust of my Life. I would not care for health without it. Sam would not come in —I wanted merely to ask him how you were this morning. When one is not quite well we turn for relief to those we love: this is no weakness of spirit in me: you know when in health I thought of nothing but you; when I shall again be so it will be the same. Brown has been mentioning to me that some hint from Sam, last night, occasions him some uneasiness. He whispered something to you concerning Brown and old Mr. Dilke which had the complexion of being something derogatory to the former. It was connected with an anxiety about Mr. D. Sr's death and an anxiety to set out for Chichester. These sort of hints point out their own solution: one cannot pretend to a delicate ignorance on the subject: you understand the whole matter. If any one, my sweet Love, has misrepresented, to you, to your Mother or Sam, any circumstances which are at all likely, at a tenth remove, to create suspicions among people who from their own interested notions slander others, pray tell me: for I feel the least attaint on the disinterested character of Brown very deeply. Perhaps Reynolds or some other of my friends may come towards evening, therefore you may choose whether you will come to see me early today before or after dinner as you may think fit. Remember me to your Mother and tell her to drag you to me if you show the least reluctance—[1].

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[1] One is a little surprised at the elasticity which, after so much illness and so much spiritual misery, was still capable of a joke of this kind—mild enough and not very witty, it is true, but still implying a certain rebound.

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[1] The signature (and perhaps something with it) is missing from the original of this letter.

LETTERS TO FANNY BRAWNE

XXXIV TO XXXIX

KENTISH TOWN—PREPARING FOR ITALY

Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death.

LETTERS TO FANNY BRAWNE.

XXXIV.

My dearest Girl,

I endeavour to make myself as patient as possible. Hunt amuses me very kindly—besides I have your ring on my finger and your flowers on the table. I shall not expect to see you yet because it would be so much pain to part with you again. When the Books you want come you shall have them. I am very well this afternoon. My dearest...

[Signature cut off.[1]]

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[1] The piece cut off the original letter is in this instance so small that nothing can well be wanting except the signature,—probably given to an autograph-collector. This letter was of course written after Keats's removal from Wentworth Place to Wesleyan Place, Kentish Town, which, according to the letter written by the poet to his sister on the 4th of May 1820, was to have been accomplished by the 6th. See page 81 of this volume. The rest of the letters to Fanny Brawne all appear to have been written at Kentish Town, either at Wesleyan Place where Keats lodged up to the 23rd of June, or at Hunt's house in Mortimer Terrace to which he seems to have moved on that day.

XXXV.

Tuesday Afternoon.

My dearest Fanny,

For this Week past I have been employed in marking the most beautiful passages in Spenser, intending it for you, and comforting myself in being somehow occupied to give you however small a pleasure. It has lightened my time very much. I am much better. God bless you.

Your affectionate
J. Keats.

XXXVI.

Tuesday Morn.

My dearest Girl,

I wrote a letter for you yesterday expecting to have seen your mother. I shall be selfish enough to send it though I know it may give you a little pain, because I wish you to see how unhappy I am for love of you, and endeavour as much as I can to entice you to give up your whole heart to me whose whole existence hangs upon you. You could not step or move an eyelid but it would shoot to my heart—I am greedy of you. Do not think of anything but me. Do not live as if I was not existing. Do not forget me—But have I any right to say you forget me? Perhaps you think of me all day. Have I any right to wish you to be unhappy

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(XXXVI) I do not find in the present series of letters any one which I can regard as the particular letter referred to in the opening sentence. If the next letter were headed *Tuesday* and this *Wednesday*, that might well be the peccant document which appears to be missing.

for me? You would forgive me for wishing it if you knew the extreme passion I have that you should love me—and for you to love me as I do you, you must think of no one but me, much less write that sentence. Yesterday and this morning I have been haunted with a sweet vision—I have seen you the whole time in your shepherdess dress. How my senses have ached at it! How my heart has been devoted to it! How my eyes have been full of tears at it! I[n]deed I think a real love is enough to occupy the widest heart. Your going to town alone when I heard of it was a shock to me—yet I expected it—*promise me you will not for some time till I get better.* Promise me this and fill the paper full of the most endearing names. If you cannot do so with good will, do my love tell me—say what you think—confess if your heart is too much fasten'd on the world. Perhaps then I may see you at a greater distance, I may not be able to appropriate you so closely to myself. Were you to loose a favorite bird from the cage, how would your eyes ache after it as long as it was in sight; when out of sight you would recover a little. Perhaps if you would, if so it is, confess to me how many things are necessary to you besides me, I might be happier; by being less tantaliz'd. Well may you exclaim, how selfish, how cruel not to let me enjoy my youth! to wish me to be unhappy. You must be so if you love me. Upon my soul I can be contented with nothing else. If you would really what is call'd enjoy yourself at a Party—if you can smile in people's faces, and wish them to admire you *now*—you never have nor ever will love me. I see *life* in nothing but the certainty of your Love—convince me of it my sweetest. If I am not somehow convinced I shall die of agony. If we love we must not live as other men and women do—I cannot brook the wolfsbane of fashion and foppery and tattle—you must be mine to die upon the rack if I want you. I do not pretend to say that I have more feeling than my fellows, but I wish you seriously to look over my letters kind and unkind and consider whether the Person who wrote them can be able to endure much longer the agonies and uncertainties which you are so peculiarly made to create. My recovery of bodily health will be of no benefit to me if you are not mine when I am well. For God's sake save me—or tell me my passion is of too awful a nature for you. Again God bless you.

J. K.

No—my sweet Fanny—I am wrong—I do not wish you to be unhappy—and yet I do, I must while there is so sweet a Beauty—my loveliest, my darling! good bye! I kiss you—O the torments!

This terrible letter calls forcibly to mind the little fragment descriptive of the Benou-Azra which the late James Thomson prefixed to his story of *Weddah and Om-el-Bonain*, one of the best tragic stories written in English verse since Keats wrote the wonderful *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil.* "The Benou-Azra are a tribe famous for love among all the tribes of Arabia. So that the manner in which they love has passed into a proverb, and God has not made any other creatures so tender in loving as are they. Sahid, son of Agba, one day asked an Arab, Of what people art thou? I am of the people who die when they love, answered the Arab. Thou art then of the tribe of Azra? said Sahid. Yes, by the master of the Caaba! replied the Arab. Whence comes it, then, that you thus love? asked Sahid. Our women are beautiful and our young men are chaste, answered the Arab." I give the extract as I find it, at page 58 of *Vane's Story, Weddah and Om-el-Bonain, and other Poems* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1881).

XXXVII.

Wednesday Morn[in]g.

My dearest Girl,

I have been a walk this morning with a book in my hand, but as usual I have been occupied with nothing but you: I wish I could say in an agreeable manner. I am tormented day and night. They talk of my going to Italy. 'Tis certain I shall never recover if I am to be so long separate from you: yet with all this devotion to you I cannot persuade myself into any confidence of you. Past experience connected with the fact of my long separation from you gives me agonies which are scarcely to be talked of. When your mother comes I shall be very sudden and expert in asking her whether you have been to Mrs. Dilke's, for she might say no to make me easy. I am literally worn to death, which seems my only recourse. I cannot forget what has pass'd. What? nothing with a man of the world, but to me deathful. I will get rid of this as much as possible. When you were in the habit of flirting with Brown you would have left off, could your own heart have felt one half of one pang mine did. Brown is a good sort of Man—he did not know he was doing me to death by inches. I feel the effect of every one of those hours in my side now; and for that cause, though he has done me many services, though I know his love and friendship for me, though at this moment I should be without pence were it not for his assistance, I will never see or speak to him[1] until we are both old men, if we are to be.

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[1] This extreme bitterness of feeling must have supervened, one would think, in increased bodily disease; for the letter was clearly

I *will* resent my heart having been made a football. You will call this madness. I have heard you say that it was not unpleasant to wait a few years—you have amusements—your mind is away—you have not brooded over one idea as I have, and how should you? You are to me an object intensely desirable[1]—the air I breathe in a room empty of you is unhealthy. I am not the same to you—no—you can wait—you have a thousand activities—you can be happy without me. Any party, any thing to fill up the day has been enough. How have you pass'd this month?[2] Who have you smil'd with? All this may seem savage in me. You do not feel as I do—you do not know what it is to love—one day you may—your time is not come. Ask yourself how many unhappy hours Keats has caused you in Loneliness. For myself I have been a Martyr the whole time, and for this reason I speak; the confession is forc'd from me by the torture. I appeal to you by the blood of that Christ you believe in: Do not write to me if you have done anything this month which it would have pained me to have seen. You may have altered—if you have not—if you still behave in dancing rooms and other societies as I have seen you—I do not want to live—if you have done so I wish this coming night may be my last. I cannot

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written after the parting of Keats and Brown at Gravesend, which took place on the 7th of May 1820, and on which occasion there is every reason to think that the friends were undivided in attachment. I imagine Keats would gladly have seen Brown within a week of this time had there been any opportunity.

[1] In the original, *desireable*.

[2] This question may perhaps be fairly taken to indicate the lapse of a month from the time when Keats left the house at Hampstead next door to Miss Brawne's, at which he probably knew her employments well enough from day to day. If so, the time would be about the first week in June 1820.

live without you, and not only you but *chaste you; virtuous you.* The Sun rises and sets, the day passes, and you follow the bent of your inclination to a certain extent—you have no conception of the quantity of miserable feeling that passes through me in a day.—Be serious! Love is not a plaything—and again do not write unless you can do it with a crystal conscience. I would sooner die for want of you than——

Yours for ever
J. Keats.

XXXVIII.

My dearest Fanny,

My head is puzzled this morning, and I scarce know what I shall say though I am full of a hundred things. 'Tis certain I would rather be writing to you this morning, notwithstanding the alloy of grief in such an occupation, than enjoy any other pleasure, with health to boot, unconnected with you. Upon my soul I have loved you to the extreme. I wish you could know the Tenderness with which I continually brood over your different aspects of countenance, action and dress. I see you come down in the morning: I see you meet me at the Window—I see every thing over again eternally that I ever have seen. If I get on the pleasant clue I live in a sort of happy misery, if on the unpleasant 'tis miserable misery. You complain of my illtreating you in word, thought and deed—I am sorry,—at times I feel bitterly sorry that I ever made you unhappy—my excuse is that those words have been wrung from me by the sharpness of my feelings. At all events and in any case I have been wrong; could I believe that I did it without any cause, I should be the most sincere of Penitents. I could give way to my repentant feelings now, I could recant all my suspicions, I could mingle with you heart and Soul though absent, were it not for some parts of your Letters. Do you suppose it possible I could ever leave you? You know what I think of myself and what of you. You know that I should feel how much it was my loss and how little yours. My friends laugh at you! I know some of them—when I know them all I shall never think of them again as friends or even acquaintance. My friends have behaved well to me in every instance but one, and there they have become tattlers, and inquisitors into my conduct: spying upon a secret I would rather die than share it with any body's confidence. For this I cannot wish them well, I care not to see any of them again. If I am the Theme, I will not be the Friend of idle Gossips. Good gods what a shame it is our Loves should be so put into the microscope of a Coterie. Their laughs should not affect you (I may perhaps give you reasons some day for these laughs, for I suspect a few people to hate me well enough, *for reasons I know of*, who have pretended a great friendship for me) when in competition with one, who if he never should see you again would make you the Saint of his memory. These Laughers, who do not like you, who envy you for your Beauty, who would have God-bless'd me from you for ever: who were plying me with disencouragements with respect to you eternally. People are revengeful—do not mind them—do nothing but love me—if I knew that for certain life and health will in such event be a heaven, and death itself will be less painful. I long to believe in immortality. I shall never be able to bid you an entire farewell. If I am destined to be happy with you here—how short is the longest Life. I wish to believe in immortality[1]—I wish to live with you for ever. Do not let my name ever pass between you and those laughers; if I have no other merit than the great Love for you, that were sufficient to keep me sacred and unmentioned in such society. If I have been cruel and unjust I swear my love has ever been greater than my cruelty which last[s] but a minute whereas my Love come what will shall last for ever. If concession to me has hurt your Pride god knows I have had little pride in my heart when thinking of you. Your name never passes my Lips—do not let mine pass yours. Those People do not like me. After reading my Letter you even then wish to see me. I am strong enough to walk over—but I dare not. I shall feel so much pain in parting with you again. My dearest love, I am afraid to see you; I am strong, but not strong enough to see you. Will my arm be ever round you again, and if so shall I be obliged to leave you again? My sweet Love! I am happy whilst I believe your first Letter. Let me be but certain that you are mine heart and soul, and I could die more happily than I could otherwise live. If you think me cruel—if you think I have sleighted you—do muse it over again and see into my heart. My love to you is "true as truth's simplicity and simpler than the infancy of truth"[2] as I think I once said before. How could I sleight you? How threaten to leave you? not in the spirit of a Threat to you—no—but in the spirit of Wretchedness in myself. My fairest, my delicious, my angel Fanny! do not believe me such a vulgar fellow. I will be as patient in illness and as believing in Love as I am able.

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[1] He was seemingly in a different phase of belief from that in which the death of his brother Tom found him. At that time he recorded that he and Tom both firmly believed in immortality. See Volume III, page 264. A further indication of his having shifted from the moorings of orthodoxy may be found in the expression in Letter XXXVII, "I appeal to you by the blood of that Christ you believe in:"—not "*we* believe in."

[2] No apology is necessary for quoting here the relative passage

Yours for ever my dearest
John Keats.

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from the play so much read by Keats, *Troilus and Cressida* (Act III, Scene II):—

O that I thought it could be in a woman—
As, if it can, I will presume in you—
To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love;
To keep her constancy in plight and youth,
Outliving beauty's outward, with a mind
That doth renew swifter than blood decays!
Or that persuasion could but thus convince me,
That my integrity and truth to you
Might be affronted with the match and weight
Of such a winnow'd purity in love;
How were I then uplifted! but, alas!
I am as true as truth's simplicity
And simpler than the infancy of truth.

XXXIX.

I do not write this till the last,
that no eye may catch it.[1]

My dearest Girl,

I wish you could invent some means to make me at all happy without you. Every hour I am more and more concentrated in you; every thing else tastes like chaff in my Mouth. I feel it almost impossible to go to Italy—the fact is I cannot leave you, and shall never taste one minute's content until it pleases chance to let me live with you for good. But I will not go on at this rate. A person in health as you are can have no conception of the horrors that nerves and a temper like mine go through. What Island do your friends propose retiring to? I should be happy to go with you there alone, but in company I should object to it; the backbitings and jealousies of new colonists who have nothing else to amuse themselves, is unbearable. Mr. Dilke came to see me yesterday, and gave me a very great deal more pain than pleasure. I shall never be able any more to endure the society of any of those who used to meet at Elm Cottage and Wentworth Place. The last two years taste like brass upon my Palate. If I cannot live with you I will live alone. I do not think my health will improve much while I am separated from you. For all this I am averse to seeing you—I cannot bear flashes of light and return into my glooms again. I am not so unhappy now as I should be if I had seen you yesterday. To be happy with you seems such an impossibility! it requires a luckier Star than mine! it will never be. I enclose a passage from one of your letters which I want you to alter a little—I want (if you will have it so) the matter express'd less coldly to me. If my health would bear it, I could write a Poem which I have in my head, which would be a consolation for people in such a situation as mine. I would show some one in Love as I am, with a person living in such Liberty as you do.[1] Shakespeare always sums up matters in the most sovereign manner. Hamlet's heart was full of such Misery as mine is when he said to Ophelia "Go to a Nunnery, go, go!" Indeed I should like to give up the matter at once—I should like to die. I am sickened at the brute world which you are smiling with. I hate men, and women more. I see nothing but thorns for the future—wherever I may be next winter, in Italy or nowhere, Brown will be living near you with his indecencies. I see no prospect of any rest. Suppose me in Rome—well, I should there see you as in a magic glass going to and from town at all hours,—————— I wish you could infuse a little confidence of human nature into my heart. I cannot muster any—the world is too brutal for me—I am glad there is such a thing as the grave—I am sure I shall never have any rest till I get there. At any rate I will indulge myself by never seeing any more Dilke or Brown or any of their Friends. I wish I was either in your arms full of faith or that a Thunder bolt would strike me.

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[1] This seems to mean that he wrote the letter to the end, and then filled in the words *My dearest Girl*, left out lest any one coming near him should chance to see them. These words are written more heavily than the beginning of the letter, and indicate a state of pen corresponding with that shown by the words *God bless you* at the end. Probably the tone of this letter may have had something to do with the return of Keats to Wentworth Place instead of Well Walk when the letter-opening affair at Hunt's (pages 92-3) induced him to insist on leaving Kentish Town. It seems likely that this was the last letter Keats ever wrote to Fanny Brawne; for Mr. Severn tells me that his friend was absolutely unable to write to her either on the voyage or in Italy. To her mother, he wrote from Naples the letter given at pages 108-10 of this volume, adding a few pathetic words of farewell to Fanny herself.

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[1] See note to *The Eve of St. Mark*, Volume II, pages 321-2.

God bless you.

J. K.

APPENDIX TO VOLUME IV.

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I.

THE LOCALITY OF WENTWORTH PLACE.

THE precise locality of Wentworth Place, Hampstead, has been a matter of uncertainty and dispute; and I found even the children of the lady to whom the last thirty-nine letters in this volume were addressed without any exact knowledge on the subject. The houses which went to make up Wentworth Place were those inhabited respectively by the Dilke family, the Brawne family, and Charles Armitage Brown; but these were not three houses as might be supposed, the fact being that Mrs. Brawne rented first Brown's house during one of his absences, and then Dilke's when the latter removed to Westminster.

At page 98 of Howitt's *Northern Heights of London*,[1] it is said of Keats:—

"From this time till 1820, when he left—in the last stage of consumption—for Italy, he resided principally at Hampstead. During most of this time, he lived with his very dear friend Mr. Charles Brown, a Russia merchant, at Wentworth Place, Downshire Hill, by Pond Street, Hampstead. Previously, he and his brother

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[1] *The Northern Heights of London or Historical Associations of Hampstead, Highgate, Muswell Hill, Hornsey, and Islington. By William Howitt, author of 'Visits to Remarkable Places.'* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1869.)

Thomas had occupied apartments at the next house to Mr. Brown's, at a Mrs. ——'s whose name his biographers have carefully omitted. With the daughter of this lady Keats was deeply in love—a passion which deepened to the last."

Mr. Howitt did not give his authority for the statement that John and Tom Keats lodged with the mother of the lady to whom John was attached; and I think it must have arisen from a misapprehension of something communicated to Mr. Howitt, perhaps in such ambiguous terms as every investigator has experienced in his time. At all events I must contradict the statement positively; nor is there any doubt where the brothers did lodge, namely in Well Walk, with the family of the local postman, Benjamin Bentley. Charles Cowden Clarke mentions in his Recollections that the lodging was "in the first or second house on the right hand, going up to the Heath"; and the rate books show that Bentley was rated from 1814 to 1824 for the house which, in 1838, was numbered 1, the house next to the public house formerly called the "Green Man," but now known as the "Wells" Tavern. At page 102, Mr. Howitt says:—

"It is to be regretted that Wentworth Place, where Keats lodged, and wrote some of his finest poetry, either no longer exists or no longer bears that name. At the bottom of John Street, on the left hand in descending, is a villa called Wentworth House; but no Wentworth Place exists between Downshire Hill and Pond Street, the locality assigned to it. I made the most rigorous search in that quarter, inquiring of the tradesmen daily supplying the houses there, and of two residents of forty and fifty years. None of them had any knowledge or recollection of a Wentworth Place. Possibly Keats's friend, Mr. Brown, lived at Wentworth House, and that the three cottages standing in a line with it and facing South-End Road, but at a little distance from the road in a garden, might then bear the name of Wentworth Place. The end cottage would then, as stated in the lines of Keats, be next door to Mr. Brown's. These cottages still have apartments to let, and in all other respects accord with the assigned locality."

Mr. Howitt seems to have meant that Wentworth House *with* the cottages may possibly have borne the name of Wentworth Place; and he should have said that the house was on the *right* hand in descending John Street. But the fact of the case is correctly stated in Mr. Thorne's *Handbook to the Environs of London*,[1] Part I, page 291, where a bolder and more explicit localization is given:

"The House in which he [Keats] lodged for the greater part of the time, then called Wentworth Place, is now called Lawn Bank, and is the end house but one on the rt. side of John Street, next Wentworth House."

Mr. Thorne adduced no authority for the statement; and it must be assumed that it was based on some of the private communications which he acknowledged generally in his preface. He may possibly have been biassed by the plane-tree which Mr. Howitt, at page 101 of *Northern Heights*, substitutes for the traditional plum-tree in quoting Lord Houghton's account of the composition of the *Ode to a Nightingale*.[2] Certainly there is a fine old plane-tree in front of the house at Lawn Bank;

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[1] *Handbook to the Environs of London, Alphabetically Arranged, containing an account of every town and village, and of all the places of interest, within a circle of twenty miles round London. By James Thorne, F.S.A. In Two Parts.* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street. 1876.)

[2] See Volume II, page 109.

and there is a local tradition of a nightingale and a poet connected with that tree; but this dim tradition may be merely a misty repetition, from mouth to mouth, of Mr. Howitt's extract from Lord Houghton's volumes. *Primâ facie*, a plane-tree might seem to be a very much more likely shelter than a plum-tree for Keats to have chosen to place his chair beneath; and yet one would think that, had Mr. Howitt purposely substituted the plane-tree for the plum-tree, it would have been because he found it by the house which he supposed to be Brown's. This however is not the case; and it should also be mentioned that at the western end of Lawn Bank, among some shrubs &c., there is an old and dilapidated plum-tree which grows so as to form a kind of leafy roof.

Six years ago, when I attempted to identify Wentworth Place beyond a doubt by local and other enquiries, the gardener at Wentworth House assured me very positively that, some fifteen or twenty years before, when Lawn Bank (then called Lawn Cottage) was in bad repair, and the rain had washed nearly all the colour off the front, he used to read the words "Wentworth Place," painted in large letters beside the top window at the extreme left of the old part of the house as one faces it; and I have since had the pleasure of reading the words there myself; for the colour got washed thin enough again some time afterwards. After a great deal of enquiry among older inhabitants of Hampstead than this gardener, I found a musician, born there in 1801, and resident there ever since, a most intelligent and clear-headed man, who had been in the habit of playing at various houses in Hampstead from the year 1812 onwards. When asked, simply and without any "leading" remark, what he could tell about a group of houses formerly known as Wentworth Place, he replied without hesitation that Lawn Bank, when he was a youth, certainly bore that name, that it was two houses, with entrances at the sides, in one of which he played as early as 1824, and that subsequently the two houses were converted into one, at very great expense, to form a residence for Miss Chester,[1] who called the place Lawn Cottage. This informant did not remember the names of the persons occupying the two houses. A surgeon of repute, among the oldest inhabitants of Hampstead, told me, as an absolute certainty, that he was there as early as 1827, knew the Brawne family, and attended them professionally at Wentworth Place, in the house forming the western half of Lawn Bank. Of Charles Brown, however, this gentleman had no knowledge.

Not perfectly satisfied with the local evidence, I forwarded to Mr. Severn a sketch-plan of the immediate locality, in order that he might identify the houses in which he visited Keats and Brown and the Brawne family: he replied that it was in Lawn Bank that Brown and Mrs. Brawne had their respective residences; and he also mentioned side entrances; but Sir Charles Dilke says his grandfather's house had the entrance in front, and only Brown's had a side entrance. Two relatives of Mrs. Brawne's who were still living in 1877, and were formerly residents in the house, also identified this block as that in which she resided, as does also Mr. William Dilke of Chichester, by whose instructions, during the absence of his brother, the name was first painted upon the house. It is hard to see what further evidence can be wanted on the subject. The recollection of one person may readily be distrusted; but where so many memories converge in one result, their evidence must be accepted; and I leave these details on record here, mainly on the ground that doubts may possibly arise again. At present it does not seem as if there could be any possible question that, in Lawn Bank, we have the immortalized Wentworth Place where Keats spent so much time, first as co-inmate with Brown in the eastern half of the block, and at last when he went to be nursed by Mrs. and Miss Brawne in the western half.

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[1] She first appeared upon the London boards in 1822, and afterwards became "Private Reader" to George IV.

It should perhaps be pointed out in regard to Mr. Thorne's expression that Keats *lodged* there, that this was not a case of lodging in the ordinary sense: he was a sharing inmate; and his share of the expenses was duly acquitted, as recorded by Mr. Dilke. In the hope of identifying the houses by some documentary evidence, I had the parish rate-books searched; in these there is no mention of John Street; but that part of Hampstead is described as the Lower Heath Quarter: no names of houses are given; and the only evidence to the purpose is that, among the rate-payers of the Lower Heath Quarter, very few in number, were Charles Wentworth Dilk (without the final *e*) and Charles Brown. The name of Mrs. Brawne does not appear; but, as she rented the house in Wentworth Place of Mr. Dilke, it may perhaps be assumed that it was he who paid the rates.

It will perhaps be thought that the steps of the enquiry in this matter are somewhat "prolixly set forth"; and the only plea in mitigation to be offered is that, without evidence, those who really care to know the facts of the case could hardly be satisfied.

II.

LEIGH HUNT'S FAREWELL WORDS TO KEATS

published in *The Indicator* for the 20th of September 1820, on Keats's departure for Italy.

AH, dear friend, as valued a one as thou art a poet,—John Keats,—we cannot, after all, find it in our hearts to be glad, now thou art gone away with the swallows to seek a kindlier clime. The rains began to fall heavily, the moment thou wast to go;—we do not say, poet-like, for thy departure. One tear in an honest eye is more precious to thy sight, than all the metaphorical weepings in the universe; and thou didst leave many starting to think how many months it would be till they saw thee again. And yet thou didst love metaphorical tears too, in their way; and couldst always liken every thing in

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This tender little address is another of the many refutations of that ignorant and heartless accusation made against Leigh Hunt, that he was not staunch in his friendship to Keats. Hunt might have satisfied the calls of friendship by sending these farewell words direct to Keats in manuscript; but he chose that friends and enemies alike should know how dear to "the Indicator" was the much-maligned author of *Endymion*; and so he printed his farewell in bold type conspicuously at the end of his number. Compare the expression "a mighty soul in a little body" with Keats's own words at page 164 of this volume—"My Mind has been the most discontented and restless one that ever was put into a body too small for it."

nature to something great or small; and the rains that beat against thy cabin-window will set, we fear, thy overworking wits upon many comparisons that ought to be much more painful to others than thyself;—Heaven mend their envious and ignorant numskulls. But thou hast "a mighty soul in a little body;" and the kind cares of the former for all about thee shall no longer subject the latter to the chance of impressions which it scorns; and the soft skies of Italy shall breathe balm upon it; and thou shalt return with thy friend the nightingale, and make all thy other friends as happy with thy voice as they are sorrowful to miss it. The little cage thou didst sometime share with us, looks as deficient without thee, as thy present one may do without us; but—farewell for awhile: thy heart is in our fields: and thou wilt soon be back to rejoin it.

III.

JOSEPH SEVERN'S ACCOUNT
OF
THE LAST DAYS OF KEATS.

LORD HOUGHTON has given us a most interesting series of extracts from letters written by Severn while tending at the death bed of Keats, and immediately after the poet's death. These extracts are here reprinted with some additions from manuscript sources. In the *Life and Letters*, immediately after the letter from Keats to Brown which is numbered CLVII in this edition (pages 113-15 of the present volume), is the following paragraph :—

"After such words as these, the comments or the description of any mere biographer must indeed jar upon every mind duly impressed with the reality of this sad history. The voice, which we have followed so long in all its varying, yet ever-true, modulations of mirth and melancholy, of wonder and of wit, of activity and anguish, and which has conferred on these volumes whatever value they may possess, is now silent, and will not be heard on earth again. The earnest utterances of the devoted friend, who transmitted to other listening affections the details of those weary hours and who followed to the very last the ebb and flow of that wave of fickle life, remain the fittest substitute for those sincere revelations which can come to us no more. It is left to passages from the letters of Mr. Severn to express in their energetic simplicity the final accidents of the hard catastrophe of so much that only asked for healthy life to be fruitful, useful, powerful, and happy."

We are not informed to whom Severn addressed the December letters from which the following extracts are given by his Lordship:

"*Dec.* 14*th*.—I fear poor Keats is at his worst. A most unlooked-for relapse has confined him to his bed with every chance against him. It has been so sudden upon what I thought convalescence, and without any seeming cause, that I cannot calculate on the next change. I dread it, for his suffering is so great, so continued, and his fortitude so completely gone, that any further change must make him delirious. This is the fifth day, and I see him get worse.

"*Dec.* 17*th*, 4 A.M.—Not a moment can I be from him. I sit by his bed and read all day, and at night I humour him in all his wanderings. He has just fallen asleep, the first sleep for eight nights, and now from mere exhaustion. I hope he will not wake till I have written, for I am anxious you should know the truth; yet I dare not let him see I think his state dangerous. On the morning of this attack he was going on in good spirits, quite merrily, when, in an instant, a cough seized him, and he vomited two cupfulls of blood. In a moment I got Dr. Clark, who took eight ounces of blood from his arm—it was black and thick. Keats was much alarmed and dejected. What a sorrowful day I had with him! He rushed out of bed and said, 'This day shall be my last;' and but for me most certainly it would. The blood broke forth in similar quantity the next morning, and he was bled again. I was afterwards so fortunate as to talk him into a little calmness, and he soon became quite patient. Now the blood has come up in coughing five times. Not a single thing will he digest, yet he keeps on craving for food. Every day he raves he will die from hunger, and I've been obliged to give him more than was allowed. His imagination and memory present every thought to him in horror; the recollection of 'his good friend Brown,' of 'his four happy weeks spent under *her* care,' of his sister and brother. O! he will mourn over all to me whilst I cool his burning forehead, till I tremble for his intellects. How can he be 'Keats' again after all this? Yet I may see it too gloomily, since each coming night I sit up adds its dismal contents to my mind.

"Dr. Clark will not say much; although there are no bounds to his attention, yet he can with little success 'administer to a mind diseased.' All that can be done he does most kindly, while his lady, like himself in refined feeling, prepares all that poor Keats takes, for in this wilderness of a place, for an invalid, there was no alternative. Yesterday Dr. Clark went all over Rome for a certain kind of fish, and just as I received it carefully dressed, Keats was taken with spitting of blood. We have the best opinion of Dr. Clark's skill: he comes over four or five times a-day, and he has left word for us to call him up, at any moment, in case of danger. My spirits have been quite pulled down. These wretched Romans have no idea of comfort. I am obliged to do everything for him. I wish you were here.

"I have just looked at him. This will be a good night."

The next letter is given in full from the manuscript:—

Rome Jany 11th. 1821
1 o'clock Morg.

My dear Madam

I said that "the first good news I had should be for the kind Mrs. Brawn[e]"—I am thankful and delighted to make good my promise—to be able at all to do it—

for amid all the horrors hovering over poor Keats this was the most dreadful—that I could see no possible way —and but a fallacious hope for his recovery—but now thank God I have a real one—I most certainly think I shall bring him back to England—at least my anxiety for his recovery and comfort make me think this—for half the cause of his danger has arisen for [*sic*] the loss of England—from the dread of never seeing it more —O! this hung upon him like a torture—never may I behold the like again—even in my direst enemy—little did I think what a task of affliction and danger I had undertaken—for I only thought of the beautiful mind of Keats—my attachment to him—and his convalescence.———

But I will tell you dear Madam the singular reasons I have for hoping his recovery.—In the first fortnight of this attack his memory presented to him every thing that was dear and delightful—even to the minutia—and with it all the persecution and I may say villany practised upon him —his exquisite sensibility for every one—save his poor self—all his own mean's and comfort expended on others —almost in vain.—These he would contrast with his present suffering—and say that all was brought on by them—and he was right.—Now he has changed to calmness and quietude—as singular as productive of good—for his mind was most certainly killing him—He has now given up all thoughts—hopes or even wish for recovery —his mind is in a state of peace from the final leave he has taken of this world and all its future hopes—this has been an immense weight for him to rise from—he remains quiet and submissive under his heavy fate———

Now if any thing will recover him—it is this absence of himself—I have perceived for the last three days sym[p]toms of recovery—Dr. Clark even thinks so—

nature again revives in him—I mean where art was used before—yesterday he permitted me to carry him from his bed room—to our sitting room—to put him clean things on—and to talk about my Painting to him.—This is my good news—dont think it otherwise my dear Madam—for I have been in such a state of anxiety and discomfiture in this barbarous place—that the least hope of my friends recovery—is a heaven to me———

For three weeks I have never left him—I have set up at night—I have read to him nearly all day—and even in the night—I light the fire—make his breakfast—and sometimes am obliged to cook—make his bed and even sweep the room—I can have these things done but never at the time when they ought and must be done—so that you will see my alternative—what enrages me most is making a fire—I blow—blow for an hour—the smoke comes fuming out—my kettle falls over on the burning sticks—no stove—Keats calling me to be with him—the fire catching my hands and the door bell ringing—all these to one quite unused and not [at ?] all capable—with the want of ever [*sic*] proper material—come not a little galling.

But to my great surprise I am not ill—or even restless—nor have I been all the time—there is nothing but what I will do for him—there is no alternative but what I think and provide myself against—except his death—not the loss of him—I am prepared to bear that—but the inhumanity—the barbarism of these Italians.—So far I have kept every thing from poor Keats—but if he did know but part what I suffer from them and their cursed laws—it would kill him.—Just to instance one thing among many—News was brought me the other day that our gentle Landlady had reported to the Police that my friend was dying of a consumption——now their Law is—that every individual thing even to the paper on the walls in each room the patient has been in—shall without reserve be destroyed by fire—the loss to be made better than good by his friends———This startled me not a little—for in our sitting Room where I wanted to bring him—there is property worth about 150£—besides all our own books &c.—invaluable—now my difficulty was to shift him to this room—and let no one know it—this was a heavy task—from the unfortunate manner of the place—our landladys apartments are on the same floor with ours—her servant waits on me when it pleases her and enters from an a[d]joining room. —I was determined on removing Keats let what would be the consequence—the change was most essential to his health and spirits—and the following Mor^{g} I set about accomplishing it.—In the first place I blocked up their door so that they could not enter—then made up a bed on the Sofa—and removed my friend too it—the greatest difficulty was in keeping all from him—I succeeded in this too—by making his bed—and sweeping the room where it is—and going dinnerless with all the pretensions of dining—persuading him that their servant had made his bed and I had been dining—he half suspected this but as he could not tell the why and the wherefore—there it ended—I got him back in the afternoon and no one save Dr. Clark knew about it.

Dr. Clark still attends him with his usual kindness—and shows his good heart in every thing he does—the like of his Lady—I cannot tell which shows us the most kindness—*I* am even a mark of their care—mince pies and numberless nice things come over to keep me alive —and but for their kindness I am afraid we should go on very gloomily——Now my dear Madam I must leave off —my eyes are begin[n]ing to be unruly—and I must write a most important Letter to our president Sir Tho^s Lawrence before I suffer myself to go to sleep.

Will you be so kind as write Mr. Taylor—that it was at Mess^{rs} Torlonias advice—Mr. Keats drew a bill for the whole sum 120£—this was to save the trouble and expence of many small bills—he now draws in small sums—I have the whole of affairs under charge—and am trying the nearest possible way—Mr. Taylor will hear from Dr. Clark about the bill—it will be well arranged——present my respectful Comp[limen]ts to Miss Brawn[e] whom I hope and trust is quite well—now that I think of her—my mind is carried to your happy Wentworth place—where all that peacefull English comfort seems to exist—O! I would my unfortunate friend had never left your Wentworth Place—for the hopeless advantages of this comfortless Italy—he has many—many times talked over "the few happy days at your house the only time when his mind was at ease"—I hope still to see him with you again—farewell my dear Madam—one more thing I must say—poor Keats cannot see any letters—at least he will not—they affect him so much and increase his danger—The two last I repented giving—he made me put them into his box—unread—more of these when I write again—meanwhile any matter of moment had better come to me—I will be very happy to rece[i]ve advice and remembrance from you—once more farewell—

Your obed^t and affectionate [?] Serv^t
Joseph Severn
3 o'clock mor^g

To Mrs Brawn[e]

At the back of the letter, underneath the fold where the seal was placed, are the words—"I have just looked at him—he is in a beautifull sleep—in look he is very much more himself—I have the greatest hopes of him——————"

The following extract from a letter dated four days later is given by Lord Houghton without indication of the correspondent's name.

"*Jan.* 15*th*, 1821, *half-past Eleven.*—Poor Keats has just fallen asleep. I have watched him and read to him to his very last wink; he has been saying to me—'Severn, I can see under your quiet look immense contention—you don't know what you are reading. You are enduring for me more than I would have you. O! that my last hour was come!' He is sinking daily; perhaps another three weeks may lose him to me for ever! I made sure of his recovery when we set out. I was selfish: I thought of his value to me; I made my own public success to depend on his candour to me.

"Torlonia, the banker, has refused us any more money; the bill is returned unaccepted, and to-morrow I must pay my last crown for this cursed lodging-place: and what is more, if he dies, all the beds and furniture will be burnt and the walls scraped, and they will come on me for a hundred pounds or more! But, above all, this noble fellow lying on the bed and without the common spiritual comforts that many a rogue and fool has in his last moments! If I do break down it will be under this; but I pray that some angel of goodness may yet lead him through this dark wilderness.

"If I could leave Keats every day for a time I could soon raise money by my painting, but he will not let me out of his sight, he will not bear the face of a stranger. I would rather cut my tongue out than tell him I must get the money—that would kill him at a word. You see my hopes of being kept by the Royal Academy will be cut off, unless I send a picture by the spring. I have written to Sir T. Lawrence. I have got a volume of Jeremy Taylor's works, which Keats has heard me read to-night. This is a treasure indeed, and came when I should have thought it hopeless. Why may not other good things come? I will keep myself up with such hopes. Dr. Clark is still the same, though he knows about the bill: he is afraid the next change will be to diarrhœa. Keats sees all this—his knowledge of anatomy makes every change tenfold worse: every way he is unfortunate, yet every one offers me assistance on his account. He cannot read any letters, he has made me put them by him unopened. They tear him to pieces—he dare not look on the outside of any more: make this known."

I give the passages dated the 12th and 14th of February, not from the *Life and Letters*, but from a version which exists in the handwriting of Miss Brawne. It has been sealed up with black wax, marked outside as "From Mr. Severn Rome," and signed on the outside "Frances Brawne." It will be seen that this copy is full of variations from Lord Houghton's, which is inserted below,[1] and furnishes additional details. It should also be mentioned that another version is given in Medwin's Life of Shelley, for the account of Keats in which work Fanny Brawne (then Mrs. Lindon) certainly gave Medwin a few details, although her name was kept secret. Medwin doubtless "edited" what was given him very considerably; but he makes it clear (as Mrs. Lindon has also recorded) that these passages belong to a letter from Severn to Mrs. Brawne, and that fact explains a good deal.

"I have just got your letter of the 15th—the contrast of your quiet friendly Hampstead with [this] lonely place and our poor suffering Keats brings the tears into my eyes.—I wish many many times that he had never left you. His recovery must have been impossible whilst he was in England and his excessive grief since has made it more so. In your care he seems to me like an infant in its mother's arms—you would have smoothed down his pain by varieties, his death might have been eased by the presence of his many friends.—But here with one solitary friend, in a place else savage for an invalid he has had one more pang added to his many for I have had the hardest task in keeping from him my painful situation—I have kept him alive by these means week after week—he had refused all food but I tried him every way—I left him no excuse—many times I have prepared his meals six times over and kept from him the trouble I had in doing it. I have not been able to leave him, that is I have not dared to do it, but when he slept. Had he come here alone he would have plunged into the grave in secret—we should never have known one syllable about him. This refle[ction] alone repays me

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[1] "*Feb. 12th.*—I have just got your letter of Jan. 15th. The con-

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trast of your quiet friendly Hampstead with this lonely place and our poor suffering Keats, brings the tears into my eyes. I wish many many times that he had never left you. His recovery would have been impossible in England; but his excessive grief has made it equally so. In your care he seemed to me like an infant in its mother's arms; you would have smoothed down his pain by variety of interests, and his death would have been eased by the presence of many friends. Here, with one solitary friend, in a place savage for an invalid, he has one more pang added to his many—for I have had the hardest task in keeping from him my painful situation. I have kept him alive week after week. He has refused all food, and I have prepared his meals six times a day, till he had no excuse left. I have only dared to leave him while he slept. It is impossible to conceive what his sufferings have been: he might, in his anguish, have plunged into the grave in secret, and not a syllable for all I have done—It is impossible to conceive what the sufferings of this poor fellow have been. Now he is still alive and calm, if I say more I shall say too much. Yet at times I have hoped he would recover but the Doctor shook his head and Keats would not hear that he was better—the thought of recovery is beyond everything dreadful to him. We now dare not perceive any improvement for the hope of death seems his only comfort. He talks of the quiet grave as the first rest he can ever have.—I can believe and feel this most truly—In the last week a great desire for books came across his mind. I got him all the books at hand and for three days this charm lasted on him but now it is gone, yet he is very calm—he is more and more reconciled to his misfortunes.

"Feb. 14th.—Little or no change has taken place in Keats since the commencement of this except this beautiful one that his mind is growing to great quietness and peace—I find this change has its rise from the increasing weakness of his body but it seems like a delightful sleep to me. I have been beating about in the tempest of his

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been known about him: this reflection alone repays me for all I have done. Now, he is still alive and calm. He would not hear that he was better: the thought of recovery is beyond everything dreadful to him: we now dare not perceive any improvement, for the hope of death seems his only comfort. He talks of the quiet grave as the first rest he can ever have.

"In the last week a great desire for books came across his mind. I got him all I could, and three days this charm lasted, but now it has gone. Yet he is very tranquil. He is more and more reconciled to his horrible misfortunes.

"*Feb. 14th.*—Little or no change has taken place, except this beautiful one, that his mind is growing to great quietness and peace. I find this change has to do with the increasing weakness of his body, but to me it seems like a delightful sleep: I have been beating about in the tempest of his mind so long. To-night he has mind so long—tonight he has talke[d] very much to me, but so easily that he at last fell into a pleasant sleep—he seems to have comfortable dreams without nightmare. This will bring on some change—it cannot be worse, it may be better. Among the many things he has requested of me tonight this is the principal, that on his grave shall be this.—

> ' Here lies one whose name was writ in water.'——

You will understand this so well that I will not say a word about it, but is it not dreadful that he should with all his misfortunes on his mind and perhaps wrought up to their abisme end his life without one jot of human happiness. When he first came here he purchased a copy of Alfieri, but put it down at the second page—'Miserame!' He was much affected at this passage."

At this point there is a gap in Miss Brawne's copy; but in the absence of the original letter I cannot say whether it represents the two lines from Alfieri, quoted by Lord Houghton instead of the opening *Miserame!*—or an allusion to some mention of the possibility of a letter coming to Keats from Miss Brawne. Whatever the gap represents, in the opening of the next paragraph, *Such* is

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talked very much, but so easily, that he fell at last into a pleasant sleep. He seems to have happy dreams. This will bring on some change,—it cannot be worse—it may be better. Among the many things he has requested of me to-night, this is the principal—that on his grave-stone shall be this inscription :—

> 'HERE LIES ONE WHOSE NAME WAS WRIT IN WATER.'

You will understand this so well that I need not say a word about it.

"When he first came here he purchased a copy of 'Alfieri,' but put it down at the second page—being much affected at the lines

> 'Misera me! sollievo a me non resta,
> Altro che il pianto, *ed il pianto è delitto!*'

Now that I know so much of his grief, I do not wonder at it.

not emphasized as in Medwin's version, and there is no note of exclamation after *come*. The copy reads simply thus:

"Such a letter has come I gave to Keats supposing it to be one of yours but it proved sadly otherwise. The glance of that letter tore him to pieces. The effects we[re] on him for many days—he did not read it—he could not but requested me to place it in his coffin together with a purse and letter (unopened) of his sisters, since which time he has requested me not to place *that letter* in his coffin but only his sisters purse and letter with some hair.—Then [?] he found many causes of his illness in the exciting and thwarting of his passions but I persuaded him to feel otherwise on this delicate point. *In his most irritable state he sees a friendless world with everything that his life presents particularly the kindness of his friends tending to his untime[ly] death.* I have got an English nurse to come two hours every other day; so that I have quite recovered my health but my nurse after coming three times has been taken ill today—this is a little unfortunate as Keats seems to like her * * *———

"You see I cannot do anything until poor Keats is

"Such a letter has come! I gave it to Keats supposing it to be one of yours, but it proved sadly otherwise. The glance at that letter tore him to pieces; the effects were on him for many days. He did not read it—he could not—but requested me to place it in his coffin, together with a purse and a letter (unopened) of his sister's; since then he has told me *not* to place that letter in his coffin, only his sister's purse and letter, and some hair. I persuaded him to think otherwise on this point. In his most irritable state he sees a friendless world, with everything that his life presents, particularly the kindness of his friends, tending to his untimely death.

"I have got an English nurse to come two hours every other day, so that I am quite recovering my health. Keats seems to like her, but she has been taken ill to-day, and cannot come. In a little back-room I get chalking out a picture; this, with swallowing a little asleep: this morning he has waked very calm—I think he seems somewhat better. He has taken half a pint of fresh milk, the milk here is beautiful to all the senses—it is delicious—for three weeks he has lived on it sometimes taking a pint and a half in a day——

"You astonish me about * * *. Poor Keats is a martyr to the tricks of these infernal scoundrels others besides G * * * * *—his is rather the fault of his [[1]] than his heart—I can understand him—but the others—ten thousand curses light upon them—Not only our friends life but his very nature has been torn to pieces by them—that he is here a thousand miles from his dear home, dying without one comfort but me when——I cannot bear to think of it——The Doctor has been—he thinks Keats worse—He says the expectoration is the most dreadful he ever saw—never met an instance where a patient was so quickly pulled down—Keats inward grief must have been beyond any limit—his lungs are in a dreadful state. His stomach has lost all

---

Italian every day, helps to keep me up. The Doctor is delighted with your kindness to Keats; he thinks him worse; his lungs are in a dreadful state; his stomach has lost all its power. Keats knew from the first little drop of blood that he must die; no common chance of living was left him."

Of the kindness which delighted the Doctor Lord Houghton says—"Probably alluding to pecuniary assistance afforded by Mr. Brown. But before this the friends were helped out of their immediate difficulty by the generosity of Mr. Taylor." It seems however that, as the letter was to "the kind Mrs. Brawne," the allusion must have been to her nursing of Keats at Wentworth Place.

[1] There is a word accidentally omitted here, perhaps *head*, perhaps *situation*: this is unfortunate, as the missing word might have made it clear whether *G* stands for *George* or for *Gifford*; but probably it stands for *George*, as there are five asterisks, and we have reason to think Severn deemed ill of George Keats at this time (see page 116),—of course misapprehending his circumstances.

its power—Keats says he has fretted to death—from the first drops of blood he knew he must die——He says no common chance of living was for him."

Lord Houghton gives this next passage as addressed to Haslam:—

"*Feb. 22nd.*—O! how anxious I am to hear from you! I have nothing to break this dreadful solitude but letters. Day after day, night after night, here I am by our poor dying friend. My spirits, my intellect, and my health are breaking down. I can get no one to change with me—no one to relieve me. All run away, and even if they did not, Keats would not do without me.

"Last night I thought he was going; I could hear the phlegm in his throat; he bade me lift him up in the bed or he would die with pain. I watched him all night, expecting him to be suffocated at every cough. This morning, by the pale daylight, the change in him frightened me: he has sunk in the last three days to a most ghastly look. Though Dr. Clark has prepared me for the worst, I shall be ill able to bear it. I cannot bear to be set free even from this my horrible situation by the loss of him.

"I am still quite precluded from painting: which may be of consequence to me. Poor Keats has me ever by him, and shadows out the form of one solitary friend: he opens his eyes in great doubt and horror, but when they fall upon me they close gently, open quietly and close again, till he sinks to sleep. This thought alone would keep me by him till he dies: and why did I say I was losing my time? The advantages I have gained by knowing John Keats are double and treble any I could have won by any other occupation. Farewell."

Lord Houghton has not recorded to whom the following communication was addressed; but it may have been to Haslam also:—

"*Feb. 27th.*—He is gone; he died with the most perfect ease—he seemed to go to sleep. On the twenty-third, about four, the approaches of death came on. 'Severn—I—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy; don't be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come.' I lifted him up in my arms. The phlegm seemed boiling in his throat, and increased until eleven, when he gradually sunk into death, so quiet, that I still thought he slept. I cannot say more now. I am broken down by four nights' watching, no sleep since, and my poor Keats gone. Three days since the body was opened: the lungs were completely gone. The doctors could not imagine how he had lived these two months. I followed his dear body to the grave on Monday,[1] with many English. They take much care of me here—I must else have gone into a fever. I am better now, but still quite disabled.

"The police have been. The furniture, the walls, the floor, must all be destroyed and changed, but this is well looked to by Dr. Clark.

"The letters I placed in the coffin with my own hand.

"This goes by the first post. Some of my kind friends would else have written before."

It is thus that Lord Houghton closes his extracts from Severn's letters:—

"Keats was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, one of the most beautiful spots on which the eye and heart of man can rest. It is a grassy slope, amid verdurous ruins of the Honorian walls of the diminished city, and surmounted by the pyramidal tomb which Petrarch attributed to Remus, but which antiquarian truth has ascribed to the humbler name of Caius Cestius, a Tribune of the people, only remembered by his sepulchre. In one of those mental voyages into the past, which often precede death, Keats had told Severn that 'he thought the intensest pleasure he had received in life was in watching the growth of flowers:' and another time, after lying a while still and peaceful, he said, 'I feel the flowers growing over me.' And there they do grow, even all the winter long—violets and daisies mingling with the fresh herbage, and, in the words of Shelley, 'making one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.' Ten weeks after the close of his holy work of friendship and charity, Mr. Severn wrote to Mr. Haslam:—'Poor Keats has now his wish—his humble wish; he is at peace in the quiet grave. I walked there a few days ago, and found the daisies had grown all over it. It is in one of the most lovely retired spots in Rome. You cannot have such a place in England. I visit it with a delicious melancholy which relieves my sadness. When I recollect for how long Keats had never been one day free from ferment and torture of mind and body, and that now he lies at rest with the flowers he so desired above him, with no sound in the air but the tinkling bells of a few simple sheep and goats, I feel indeed grateful that he is here, and remember how earnestly I prayed that his sufferings might end, and that he might be removed from a world where no one grain of comfort remained for him.'"

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[1] This was the 26th of February.

A number of highly interesting extracts from Severn's letters to Brown written from time to time during the seventeen years which followed Keats's death will be found in the general appendix, among the recollections and other utterances of Keats's friends and contemporaries; but this place seems the fittest in which to insert a letter of far later date addressed to me by Severn. When I was preparing the Letters to Fanny Brawne for the press and had already begun the present edition of Keats's works, I was in frequent correspondence with Severn, who showed the liveliest interest in both matters. When he first heard of the existence of the letters he wrote (26 September 1877)—

"Your letter is a joy to me—that you have received thirty seven letters of Keats to Fanny Brawne astonishes me with delight for they must be even superior to his poetry and will be a boon to the world quite unlooked for—* * * Keats when in Italy was *unable* to write to Fanny Brawne on account of his illness, but she wrote him, three times, Keats was too far gone to open these letters, but requested me to place them on his heart in his coffin—he was painfully affected at the sight of them."

On the 10th of December 1877 Severn wrote again—

"Your book I am most anxious to see and hope 'tis nearly got together for I think of it day and night."

Some few weeks later the volume reached him and was acknowledged in the following terms :—

Rome Scala Dante
5th Feb. 1878.

Dear Mr. Forman

The thirty-seven letters of Keats to Fanny Brawne I have read with great pain inasmuch as from them I now understand *for the first* time the sufferings and death of the Poet—He did not confide to me this serious passion and it now seems to me *but for this cause he might have lived many* years—I can now understand his want of courage to speak as it was consuming him in body and mind.

What could Mrs. Brawne and her daughter anticipate but a fatal conclusion as his strength declined every day.

I don't know what the Public will think of these letters, but the mental suffering of the Poet is evident at every page and in comparison with his other letters published by Lord Houghton there is no longer *that fine elasticity of spirit* which is the character of his writings.

Perhaps I view the work more painfully as I was not aware of such torment existing in the Poet's mind and as I saw him struck down from health and vigour to sickness and death you will not wonder at my emotion now that I find the fatal cause.

The first symptoms of his illness increased from day to day until it absorbed his whole mind—the change dismayed me, but I could not imagine the cause, and I think he must have been sensible this passion was destroying [him] or he would have made it known to me. He referred at times to his being cut off from his world of poetry as his great misfortune *but never to Fanny Brawne.*

I left England with him with the confidence of his recovery for so the Doctors assured me but in less than a year this fatal passion destroyed him.

I crave pardon for my bad writing but I have been very much upset and altho 'tis half a century since the disaster, yet I feel it most severely—

believe me most sincerely yours
Joseph Severn

to Harry Buxton Forman Esq^{re}.

IV.

LETTER FROM LEIGH HUNT TO JOSEPH SEVERN

WRITTEN AFTER KEATS'S DEATH BUT BEFORE THE NEWS OF IT REACHED ENGLAND.

Vale of Health, Hampstead,
March 8, 1821.

Dear Severn,

You have concluded, of course, that I have sent no letters to Rome, because I was aware of the effect they would have on Keats's mind; and this is the principal cause,—for besides what I have been told of his emotions about letters in Italy, I remember his telling me on one occasion, that, in his sick moments, he never wished to receive another letter, or ever to see another face however friendly. But still I should have written to

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The most touching of all Hunt's utterances concerning Keats is this letter to Severn, which Lord Houghton has published in the *Life*, *Letters* &c., and again in the *Life and Letters* (1867), with the following note :—

"After the death of Keats Mr. Severn received the following letter from Mr. Leigh Hunt, in the belief that he was still alive, and that it might be communicated to him. But even while these warm words were being written in his own old home, he had already been committed to that distant grave, which has now become a place of pilgrimage to those fellow-countrymen who then knew not what they had lost, and who are ready, too late, to lavish on his name the love and admiration that might once have been very welcome."

you had I not been almost at death's-door myself. You will imagine how ill I have been when you hear that I have but just begun writing again for the "Examiner" and "Indicator," after an interval of several months, during which my flesh wasted from me in sickness and melancholy. Judge how often I thought of Keats, and with what feelings. Mr. Brown tells me he is comparatively calm now, or rather quite so. If he can bear to hear of us, pray tell him—but he knows it all already, and can put it in better language than any man. I hear he does not like to be told that he may get better; nor is it to be wondered at, considering his firm persuasion that he shall not recover. He can only regard it as a puerile thing, and an insinuation that he cannot bear to think he shall die. But if this persuasion should happen no longer to be so strong upon him, or if he can now put up with such attempts to console him, remind him of what I have said a thousand times, and that I still (upon my honour, Severn), think always, that I have seen too many instances of recovery from apparently desperate cases of consumption, not to indulge in hope to the very last. If he cannot bear this, tell him—tell that great poet and noble-hearted man—that we shall all bear his memory in the most precious part of our hearts, and that the world shall bow their heads to it, as our loves do. Or if this again will trouble his spirit, tell him we shall never cease to remember and love him, and, that the most sceptical of us has faith enough in the high things that nature puts into our heads, to think that all who are of one accord in mind and heart, are journeying to one and the same place, and shall unite somehow or other again face to face, mutually conscious, mutually delighted. Tell him he is only before us on the road, as he was in everything else; or, whether you tell him the latter or no, tell him the former, and add that we shall never forget he was so, and that we are coming after him. The tears are again in my eyes, and I must not afford to shed them. The next letter I write shall be more to yourself, and a little more refreshing to your spirits, which we are very sensible must have been greatly taxed. But whether our friend dies or not, it will not be among the least lofty of our recollections by-and-by, that you helped to smooth the sick-bed of so fine a being.

God bless you, dear Severn.

Your sincere friend,
Leigh Hunt.

GENERAL APPENDIX.

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GENERAL APPENDIX.

I.

ADONAIS

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS, AUTHOR OF ENDYMION, HYPERION ETC.

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

Αστήρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ενι ζῶοισιν εῶος.
Νυν δε θανῶν, λαμπεις ἕσπερος εν φθίμενοις.
PLATO.

PREFACE.

Φάρμακον ἦλθε, Βίων, ποτι σον στομα, φάρμακον εἶδες·
Πῶς τευ τοῖς χείλεσσι ποτέδραμε, κοὐκ εγλυκανθη ;
Τις δὲ βροτος τοσσοῦτον ἀνάμερος, ἢ κερασαι τοι,
Ἢ δοῦναι λαλέοντι το φάρμακον ; ἔκφυγεν ᾠδαν.
MOSCHUS, EPITAPH. BION.

IT is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem, a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modelled, prove, at least that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of Hyperion, as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth[1] year, on the [23rd] of [February] 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses, was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and where cankerworms abound, what wonder, if it's young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his Endymion, which appeared in the Quarterly Review, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics, of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said, that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows, or one, like Keats's composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates, is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to "Endymion"; was it a poem, whatever might be it's defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated with various degrees of complacency and panegyric, "Paris," and "Woman," and a "Syrian Tale," and Mrs. Lefanu, and Mr. Barrett, and Mr. Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men, who in their venal good nature, presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev. Mr. Milman and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery, dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable man! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse, that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

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[1] Shelley should of course have said *in his twenty-sixth year*; but in those days Keats's age was, I believe, in dispute.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me until the Elegy was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of Endymion, was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed "almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend." Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from "such stuff as dreams are made of." His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career—may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion for his name!

The following cancelled passages from the preface should be preserved here:—

. . . Reviewers, with some rare exceptions, are a most stupid and malignant race. As a bankrupt thief turns thieftaker in despair, so an unsuccessful author turns critic. But a young spirit panting for fame, doubtful of its powers, and certain only of its aspirations, is ill-qualified to assign its true value to the sneer of this world. He knows not that such stuff as this is of the abortive and monstrous births which time consumes as fast as it produces. He sees the truth and falsehood, the merits and demerits, of his case inextricably entangled. . . No personal offence should have drawn from me this public comment upon such stuff. . .

. . . The offence of this poor victim, seems to have consisted solely in his intimacy with Leigh Hunt, Mr. Hazlitt, and some other enemies of despotism and superstition. My friend Hunt has a very hard skull to crack, and will take a deal of killing. I do not know much of Mr. Hazlitt, but. . .

. . . I knew personally but little of Keats; but on the news of his situation I wrote to him, suggesting the propriety of trying the Italian climate, and inviting him to join me. Unfortunately he did not allow me. . .

ADONAIS.

I.

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!

II.

Where wert thou mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veilèd eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

III.

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

IV.

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania!—He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

V.

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

VI.

But now, thy youngest, dearest one has perished,
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipt before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII.

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,

He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!—
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace,
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

IX.

O, weep for Adonais!—The quick Dreams,
The passion-wingèd Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

X.

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries;
"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;

"See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
"Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
"A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

XI.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipt her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and wingèd reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

XII.

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music: the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and past to its eclipse.

XIII.

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,

And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp ;—the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV.

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watchtower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day ;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

XV.

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day ;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds :—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

XVI.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves ; since her delight is flown
For whom should she have waked the sullen year ?
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both

Thou Adonais: wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

XVII.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

XVIII.

Ah woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX.

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos; in its stream immersed
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight,
The beauty and the joy of their renewèd might.

XX.

The leprous corpse touched by this spirit tender
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning?—th' intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

XXI.

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

XXII.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
"Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
"A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried: "Arise!"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

XXIII.

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV.

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell:
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV.

In the death chamber for a moment Death
Shamed by the presence of that living Might
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
"As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
"Leave me not!" cried Urania: her distress
Roused Death: Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

XXVI.

" Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;
" Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
" And in my heartless breast and burning brain
" That word, that kiss shall all thoughts else survive,
" With food of saddest memory kept alive,
" Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
" Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
" All that I am to be as thou now art!
" But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!"

XXVII.

" Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
" Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
" Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
" Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
" Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
" Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
" Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
" Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
" The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

XXVIII.

" The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
" The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
" The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
" Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
" And whose wings rain contagion;—how they fled,
" When like Apollo, from his golden bow,
" The Pythian of the age[1] one arrow sped
" And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
" They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

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[1] Byron was of course alluded to both here and as the Pilgrim of Eternity in stanza XXX, the close of which alludes to Moore, and the next four stanzas to Shelley.

XXIX.

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
"He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
"Is gathered into death without a dawn,
"And the immortal stars awake again;
"So is it in the world of living men:
"A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
"Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
"It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
"Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

XXX.

Thus ceased she: and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue.

XXXI.

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

XXXII.

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked;—a Power

Girt round with weakness; it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

XXXIII.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

XXXIV.

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own;
As in the accents of an unknown land,
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: "who art thou?"
He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—Oh! that it should be so!

XXXV.

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,

In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,[1]
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one;
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI.

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

XXXVII.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,

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[1] Leigh Hunt is now universally admitted to be the person referred to in this stanza; and the following cancelled passage relating to him has a strong interest here:

And then came one of sweet and earnest looks,
Whose soft smiles to his dark and night-like eyes
Were as the clear and ever-living brooks
Are to the obscure fountains whence they rise,
Showing how pure they are: a Paradise
Of happy truth upon his forehead low
Lay, making wisdom lovely, in the guise
Of earth-awakening morn upon the brow
Of star-deserted heaven, while ocean gleams below.

His song, though very sweet, was low and faint,
A simple strain——

Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

XXXVIII.

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

XXXIX.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

XL.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;

From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI.

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on it's despair!

XLII.

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight

To it's own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in it's beauty and it's might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

XLIV.

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV.

The inheritors of unfulfillèd renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

XLVI.

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
" It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
" Swung blind in unascended majesty,
" Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
" Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper of our throng!'

XLVII.

Who mourns for Adonais? oh come forth
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

XLVIII.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre
O, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX.

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead,
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

L.

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;

And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

LI.

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

LII.

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is past from the revolving year,

And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near;
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

II.

SHELLEY, KEATS, AND ADONAIS:

EXTRACTS FROM SHELLEY'S LETTERS.

In view of the great interest which attaches to the relative attitudes of two such men as Shelley and Keats, and to everything bearing upon such a poem as *Adonais*, it seems desirable to bring together here the many passages in Shelley's letters in which Keats and the Elegy on his death find mention. The following may not be all the utterances of Shelley on this subject; but I do not think there is much omitted; and it is worth noticing how tenaciously good an opinion the poet retained, in his modest way, of this particular work.

There is an unpublished letter written by Shelley from Italy to Mr. Ollier, belonging to August 1819, wherein he acknowledges the receipt of a parcel of books "which seems to have been a year on its voyage." He says "I have only had time to look at Lamb's works, but Altham and Endymion are both before me." In a postscript he says "Pray send a copy of my Poem or anything which I may hereafter publish to Mr. Keats with my best regards." He had added "If I should say when I have read it that I admire his Endymion he probably . . ." but this is cancelled in the manuscript. It was not long before he had read it. In a further letter from Shelley to Mr. Ollier, dated "Leghorn September 6th, 1819" (*Shelley Memorials*, page 119), he says—

"I have read your *Altham*, and Keats's poem and

Lamb's works. For the second in this list much praise is due to me for having read it, the author's intention appearing to be that no person should possibly get to the end of it. Yet it is full of some of the highest and the finest gleams of poetry; indeed, everything seems to be viewed by the mind of a poet which is described in it. I think, if he had printed about fifty pages of fragments from it, I should have been led to admire Keats as a poet more than I ought, of which there is now no danger." In the same letter Shelley requested that, whenever he published, copies of his books might be sent to certain people, from him; and among these was Keats.

Writing to Thomas Love Peacock from Pisa early in November 1820, probably no great while after the receipt of the *Lamia* volume, Shelley says (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 191)—

"Among the modern things which have reached me is a volume of poems by Keats: in other respects insignificant enough, but containing the fragment of a poem called *Hyperion*. I dare say you have not time to read it; but it is certainly an astonishing piece of writing, and gives me a conception of Keats which I confess I had not before."

It should be noted for what it may be worth that Medwin in the second volume of his Life of Shelley (page 109) says—

"I will state what Shelley's opinions were of his [Keats's] poetry. Those he entertained respecting Endymion, are already before the public. He often lamented that, under the adoption of false canons of taste, he spoiled by their affectation his finest passages. But in the volume that Keats published in 1820, he perceived in every one of these productions a marked and continually progressing improvement, and hailed with delight his release from his leading-strings, his emancipation from what he called 'a perverse and limited school.' The Pot of Basil, and the Eve of St. Agnes, he read and re-read with ever new delight, and looked upon Hyperion as almost faultless, grieving that it was but a fragment, and that Keats had not been encouraged to complete a work worthy of Milton. He used to say that 'the scenery and drawing of his Saturn Dethroned, and the fallen Titans, surpassed those of Satan and his rebellious angels in the Paradise Lost,—possessing more human interest; that the whole poem was supported throughout with a colossal grandeur equal to the subject.' Shelley had this little volume continually in his pocket, the best proof of his appreciation of its merits. Nothing more deeply affected Shelley than the premature removal from a world, that deserved to lose him, of Keats. Shelley thought that he died too soon for his fame, great as it is; . . ."

I am fain to believe that, on nearer acquaintance with the book, Shelley found more to engage his admiration than *Hyperion*; and in this respect common sense and probability seem to support Medwin, whose tale moreover consists with another given further on (page 271). However that may be, on the 11th of November 1820, Shelley wrote to Mrs. Hunt (Leigh Hunt's Correspondence, Volume I, page 158)—

"Keats's new volume has arrived to us, and the fragment called Hyperion promises for him that he is destined to become one of the first writers of the age. His other things are imperfect enough, and, what is worse, written in the bad sort of style which is becoming fashionable among those who fancy that they are imitating Hunt and Wordsworth." In the same letter he asks—

"Where is Keats now? I am anxiously expecting him in Italy, when I shall take care to bestow every possible attention on him. I consider his a most valuable life, and I am deeply interested in his safety. I intend to be the physician both of his body and his soul, to keep the one warm, and to teach the other Greek and Spanish. I am aware, indeed, in part, that I am nourishing a rival who will far surpass me; and this is an additional motive, and will be an added pleasure."

Writing three months later to Peacock he thus returned to the charge (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 195)—

"Among your anathemas of the modern attempts in poetry, do you include Keats's *Hyperion?* I think it very fine. His other Poems are worth little; but if the *Hyperion* be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries."

Between this and the next allusion, the news of Keats's death at Rome had reached him, for the letter which he addressed to his friends John and Maria Gisborne on the 5th of June 1821 (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 203) contains the following passage—

"I have been engaged these last days in composing a poem on the death of Keats, which will shortly be finished; and I anticipate the pleasure of reading it to you, as some of the very few persons who will be interested in it and understand it. It is a highly-wrought *piece of art*, and perhaps better, in point of composition, than anything I have written."

Three days later he wrote to Mr. Ollier the following letter (*Shelley Memorials*, page 155), which, by the bye, I have revised from the original:—

Pisa, June 8th 1821

Dear Sir

You may announce for publication a poem entitled "Adonais." It is a lament on the death of poor

Keats, with some inter[s]persed stabs on the assassins of his peace and of his fame; and will be preceded by a criticism on *Hyperion*, asserting the due claims which that fragment gives him to the rank which I have assigned him. My poem is finished, and consists of about 40 Spenser, stanzas. I shall send it to you, either printed at Pisa, or transcribed in such a manner as it shall be difficult for the reviser to leave such errors as *assist* the obscurity of the Prometheus. But in case I send it printed, it will be merely that mistakes may be avoided. I shall only have a few copies struck off in the cheapest manner.

If you have interest enough in the subject, I could wish that you inquired of some of the friends and relations of Keats respecting the circumstances of his death, and could transmit me any information you may be able to collect, and especially as [to] the degree in which, as I am assured, the brutal attack in the Quarterly review excited the disease by which he perished.

I have received no answer to my last letter to you. Have you received my contribution to your magazine [?]

* * * * *

Dear Sir,
yours very sincerely,
P. B. Shelley.

On the 11th of June 1821 he wrote to Mr. Ollier—

"'Adonais' is finished: and you will soon receive it. It is little adapted for popularity, but is perhaps the least imperfect of my compositions."

On the 13th of June, it must have been, and not on the 13th of January 1821, that John Gisborne sent to Shelley and Mary Shelley Mr. Finch's account of the last days of Keats. "Wednesday, 13th Jan. 1821" has hitherto been printed at the head of Gisborne's letter;

but, besides the obvious anachronism, there is the fact that the 13th of January 1821 was a Saturday, while the 13th of June 1821 was a Wednesday. On that day, then, Gisborne wrote—"I have this moment received a letter from Mr. Finch, which contains some circumstances relative to Keats. I would not delay communicating them to you, and I hope to be in time for the Procaccino, though it is already half-past twelve. I hope Mr. S. received my long despatch a few days since."

Finch's account is as follows:—

"I hasten to communicate to you what I know about the latter period and closing scene of the pilgrimage of the original poet from whose works, hitherto unseen by me, you have favoured me with such a beautiful quotation. Almost despairing of his case, he left his native shores by sea, in a merchant vessel for Naples, where he arrived, having received no benefit during the passage, and brooding over the most melancholy and mortifying reflections; and nursing a deeply-rooted disgust to life and to the world, owing to having been infamously treated by the very persons whom his generosity had rescued from want and woe. He journeyed from Naples to Rome, and occupied, at the latter place, lodgings which I had, on former occasions, more than once inhabited. Here he soon took to his bed, from which he never rose more. His passions were always violent, and his sensibility most keen. It is extraordinary that, proportionally as his strength of body declined, these acquired fresh vigour; and his temper at length became so outrageously violent, as to injure himself, and annoy every one around him. He eagerly wished for death. After leaving England, I believe that he seldom courted the muse. He was accompanied by a friend of mine, Mr. Severn, a young painter, who will, I think, one day be the Coryphæus of the English school. He left all, and sacrificed every prospect, to accompany and watch over his friend Keats. For many weeks previous to his death, he would see no one but Mr. Severn, who had almost risked his own life, by unwearied attendance upon his friend, who rendered his situation doubly unpleasant by the violence of his passions exhibited even towards him, so much, that he might be judged insane. His intervals of remorse, too, were poignantly bitter. I believe that Mr. Severn, the heir of what little Keats left behind him at Rome, has only come into possession of very few manuscripts of his friend. You will be pleased with the information that the poetical volume, which was the inseparable companion of Keats, and which he took for his most darling model in composition, was, the Minor Poems of Shakspeare."

On the 16th of June 1821 Shelley replied to John Gisborne (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 204)—

My dear Friend,

I have received the heart-rending account of the closing scene of the great genius whom envy and ingratitude scourged out of the world. I do not think that if I had seen it before, I could have composed my poem. The enthusiasm of the imagination would have overpowered the sentiment.

As it is I have finished my Elegy; and this day I send it to the press at Pisa. You shall have a copy the moment it is completed. I think it will please you. I have dipped my pen in consuming fire for his destroyers; otherwise the style is calm and solemn.

* * * * *

Most affectionately yours,

P. B. S.

It was not till nearly a month later that the pamphlet was completed at Didot's press, for on the 13th of July 1821 Shelley wrote to the Gisbornes (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 206)—

"A thousand thanks for your maps; in return for which I send you the only copy of Adonais the printer has yet delivered. I wish I could say, as Glaucus could, in the exchange for the arms of Diomed,—ἑκατόμβοἰ ἐννεαβοίων."

He had judged rightly that John and Maria Gisborne were among the very few persons capable at that time of interest in and intelligence of his great Elegy—now perhaps the most universally renowned of his mature works: in less than a week the first copy had sped from the Bagni di Pisa to Leghorn, a sympathetic acknowledgment had sped from Leghorn to the Bagni, and the Poet was again addressing the friendly couple on the 19th of July 1821 (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 207) as follows:

Bagni, July 19th [1821]

My dearest Friends,

I am fully repaid for the painful emotions from which some verses of my poem sprung, by your sympathy and approbation—which is all the reward I expect—and as much as I desire. It is not for me to judge whether, in the high praise your feelings assign me, you are right or wrong. The poet and the man are two different natures; though they exist together, they may be unconscious of each other, and incapable of deciding on each other's powers and efforts by any reflex act. The decision of the cause, whether or no I am a poet, is removed from the present time to the hour when our posterity shall assemble; but the court is a very severe one, and I fear that the verdict will be, "Guilty—death!"

I shall be with you on the first summons. I hope that the time you have reserved for us, "this bank and shoal of time," is not so short as you once talked of.

In haste, most affectionately yours,
P. B. S.

I suppose the undated letter to Mr. Ollier, a part of which follows would be of a date a little later than the foregoing: I give it from the manuscript:—

Dear Sir,

I send you a sketch for a frontispiece to the poem "Adonais." Pray let it be put into the Engraver's hands immediately, as the poem is already on its way to you, and I should wish it to be ready for its arrival—The poem is beautifully printed, and what is of more consequence, correctly: indeed it was to obtain this last point that I sent it to the press at Pisa.—In a few days you will receive the bill of lading.

* * * * *

Dear Sir,
Your's very truly
P. B. S.

On or about the 10th of August 1821, he wrote to Peacock, surely with just a touch of sarcasm inspired by the hard-grained cynicism of that talented satirist's *Four Ages of Poetry*—

"I have sent you by the Gisbornes a copy of the *Elegy on Keats*. The subject I know, will not please you; but the composition of the poetry, and the taste in which it is written, I do not think bad. You and the enlightened public will judge."

Let us hope and trust that Peacock duly appreciated this juxtaposition of his own judgment with that of the "enlightened public" of that day, concerning whose enlightenment and Shelley's convictions thereanent, no one was better acquainted than the author of *Headlong Hall* and *Nightmare Abbey*, not to mention *The Genius of the Thames*, *Palmyra*, and *Rhododaphne*.

On the 22nd of the same month the immortal elegist of Keats wrote in his kindliest vein to his cousin Thomas Medwin, enquiring after certain trifling stanzas by that worthy, and almost in the same breath saying (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 233)—

"I am happy to hear that Adonais pleased you; I was considering how I could send you a copy:—nor am I less flattered by your friend Sir John's approbation.—I think I shall write again."

Who this admiring Sir John was, I have no knowledge whatever.

To Leigh Hunt Shelley wrote on the 26th of August 1821 (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 237)—

"Before this you will have seen 'Adonais.' Lord Byron, I suppose from modesty on account of his being mentioned in it, did not say a word of 'Adonais,' though he was loud in his praise of 'Prometheus': and, what you will not agree with him in, censure of the Cenci.'"

Probably Shelley, whose judgment of the people surrounding him was as keen and trenchant as his heart was loving and universally tolerant, intuitively recognized the modesty of Byron as being of such a quality that it came uppermost when his Lordship was associated with others in any meed of praise. Byron's gratification at finding himself called "the Pythian of the age" and

"The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,"

by one whose greatness he so clearly recognized (in silence) as he did Shelley's, would be considerably dashed by the reflexion that after all he was only one of the "mountain Shepherds" of the wondrous pastoral episode, and must jostle crooks and sheep-skins with Leigh Hunt and Tommy Moore of the "toad-faced cupids." And it was perhaps the perception of the Pilgrim's inordinate vanity which tinged with bitterness the account of Byron's praises, and induced Shelley to wind up with the memorable sentence—

"Certainly, if 'Marino Faliero' is a drama, the 'Cenci' is not: but that between ourselves."

Another of the exceptional few who knew how to value *Adonais* was dear, liberal, constant, witty, and wise Horace Smith, to whom Shelley wrote on the 14th of September 1821 (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 240)—

"I am glad you like 'Adonais,' and, particularly, that you do not think it metaphysical, which I was afraid it was. I was resolved to pay some tribute of Sympathy to the unhonoured dead, but I wrote, as usual, with a total ignorance of the effect that I should produce."

In a letter to his publisher dated the 25th of September 1821, Shelley wrote (*Shelley Memorials*, page 159)—

"The Adonais, in spite of its mysticism, is the least imperfect of my compositions, and, as the image of my regret and honour for poor Keats I wish it to be so.— I shall write to you probably by next post on the subject of that poem, and should have sent the promised criticism for the second edition had I not mislaid, and in vain sought for, the volume that contains Hyperion."

In regard to this poem Shelley even went so far as to be interested in what the press had to say, for he wrote to John Gisborne on the 22nd of October 1821 (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 244)—

"I should like very much to hear what is said of my

Adonais, and you would oblige me by cutting out, or making Ollier cut out, any respectable criticism on it, and sending it to me; you know I do not mind a crown or two in postage."

On the 14th of November 1821 he wrote again to Mr. Ollier (*Shelley Memorials*, page 160)—

"I am especially curious to hear the fate of Adonais. I confess I should be surprised if *that* poem were born to an immortality of oblivion."

It was not until the 29th of November 1821 that the letter to Severn was written to accompany that copy of *Adonais* which has sometimes been supposed to have some sort of priority over other copies in consequence of a misapprehension of the words in Lord Houghton's *Life and Letters* (1867), page 328—

"The first copy of the 'Adonäis' (printed at Pisa) was sent with the following letter to Mr. Severn, then enjoying the travelling pension of the Royal Academy, which had not been granted to any student for a considerable period."

The words *the first copy* are of course employed to designate a copy of the first edition; and the particular copy must rest its distinction upon other circumstances, such as that Severn received it from Shelley and that Byron is said to have made some of the marks which it bears. Here is the letter:—

Pisa,
Nov. 29th, 1821.

Dear Sir,

I send you the elegy on poor Keats—and I wish it were better worth your acceptance. You will see, by the preface, that it was written before I could obtain any particular account of his last moments; all that I still know, was communicated to me by a friend who had derived his information from Colonel Finch; I have ventured to express, as I felt, the respect and admiration which *your* conduct towards him demands.

In spite of his transcendent genius, Keats never was, nor ever will be, a popular poet; and the total neglect and obscurity in which the astonishing remnants of his mind still lie, was hardly to be dissipated by a writer, who, however he may differ from Keats in more important qualities, at least resembles him in that accidental one, a want of popularity.

I have little hope, therefore, that the poem I send you will excite any attention, nor do I feel assured that a critical notice of his writings would find a single reader. But for these considerations, it had been my intention to have collected the remnants of his compositions, and to have published them with a Life and Criticism. Has he left any poems or writings of whatsoever kind, and in whose possession are they? Perhaps you would oblige me by information on this point.

Many thanks for the picture you promise me: I shall consider it among the most sacred relics of the past. For my part, I little expected, when I last saw Keats at my friend Leigh Hunt's, that I should survive him.

Should you ever pass through Pisa, I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you, and of cultivating an acquaintance into something pleasant, begun under such melancholy auspices.

Accept, my dear sir, the assurance of my highest esteem, and believe me,

Your most sincere and faithful servant,
Percy B. Shelley.

Do you know Leigh Hunt? I expect him and his family *here* every day.

Still staunch in his convictions as to the worth of his Elegy, he wrote to Peacock on or about the 11th of January 1822 (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 250)—

"You will have seen my *Adonais* and perhaps my Hellas, and I think, whatever you may judge of the subject, the composition of the first poem will not wholly displease you. I wish I had something better to do than furnish this jingling food for the hunger of oblivion, called verse, but I have not; and ... I cannot hope to have."

On the 11th of January 1822 Shelley wrote too to Mr. Ollier a letter on the general business relations of poet and publisher, in which occurs the following passage—

"I was also, more than commonly interested in the success of Adonais,—I do not mean the sale, but the effect produced—and I should have [been] glad to have received some communication from you respecting it. ——I do not know even, whether it has been published, and still less whether it has been republished with the alterations I sent."

Presumably some of the "critical" deliverances of the period reached him later at Pisa; for in a letter to Gisborne dated the 10th of April 1822 (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 262) he says—

"I know what to think of Adonais, but what to think of those who confound it with the many bad poems of the day, I know not."

And there is a further touch of disappointment in the letter of the 18th of June 1822 in which he tells Gisborne that he has written to Ollier, his publisher, to send his account to Gisborne, and mentions Adonais perhaps for the last time in writing (Prose Works, Volume IV, page 279)—

"The 'Adonais' I wished to have had a fair chance, both because it is a favourite with me and on account of the memory of Keats, who was a poet of great genius, let the classic party say what it will."

I cannot more appropriately close these extracts than by citing Shelley's noble

FRAGMENT ON KEATS,

WHO DESIRED THAT ON HIS TOMB SHOULD BE INSCRIBED—

"Here lieth One whose name was writ on water."
But, ere the breath that could erase it blew,
Death, in remorse for that fell slaughter,
Death, the immortalizing winter, flew
Athwart the stream,—and time's printless torrent grew
A scroll of crystal, blazoning the name
Of Adonais.——

III.

PASSAGES RELATING TO KEATS

EXTRACTED FROM

THE WRITINGS OF BYRON.

In the *Life, Letters* &c. (Volume I, page 204) and in the *Life and Letters* (1867, page 173), Lord Houghton has drawn attention to the "rage of jealous injustice" into which Byron was thrown by the very moderate laudations of Keats published in *The Edinburgh Review*; and so much has been written on the subject that I cannot but do the same in regard to Byron as I have done in regard to Shelley,—collect, that is to say, as far as may be, into this appendix, his various utterances concerning Keats. I confess that for my own part they neither please nor interest me; but, as the utterances of the most considerable figure in literature since the time of Shakespeare, they have so much weight that their exclusion from an edition of Keats in which it is sought to bring together everything of illustrative importance would be an obvious reproach.

In 1833, in Volume XV of the excellent edition of Byron's Life and Works in seventeen volumes, appeared for the first time the greater portion of a projected pamphlet, which, though set up in type in 1820, was never issued. It is headed "Ravenna, March 15, 1820"; and the title is *Some Observations upon an Article in Blackwood's Magazine, No. XXIX., August, 1819.* It is of course in the main a reply to certain statements of some one of Blackwood's slaughtermen about Byron himself; but the noble lord, being galled by the attack of one man, struck out viciously all round at unoffending as well as offending persons, as he had done eleven years before in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*; and Keats came in for a share of abuse. In illustration of some remarks he says he will "conclude with two quotations"; the first is from a very properly forgotten work by his friend the Reverend Francis Hodgson: "The second", writes Byron, "is from the volume of a young person learning to write poetry, and beginning by teaching the art. Hear him:

'But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of—were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile; so that ye taught a school
Of *dolts* to *smooth*, *inlay*, and *chip*, and *fit*
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of poesy. Ill-fated, impious race,
That blasphemed the bright lyrist to his face,
And did not know it; no, they went about
Holding a poor *decrepit* standard out
Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large
The name of *one* Boileau!'

"A little before the manner of Pope is termed

'A *scism*,[1]
Nurtured by *foppery* and barbarism
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.'

"I thought '*foppery*,' was a consequence of *refinement*; but *n'importe*.

---

[1] So spelt by the author. [BYRON'S NOTE.]

"The above will suffice to show the notions entertained by the new performers on the English lyre of him who made it most tuneable, and the great improvements of their own 'variazioni.'

"The writer of this is a tadpole of the Lakes, a young disciple of the six or seven new schools, in which he has learnt to write such lines and such sentiments as the above. He says 'easy was the task' of imitating Pope, or it may be of equalling him, I presume. I recommend him to try before he is so positive on the subject, and then compare what he will have *then* written and what he has *now* written with the humblest and earliest compositions of Pope, produced in years still more youthful than those of Mr. Keats when he invented his new 'Essay on Criticism,' entitled 'Sleep and Poetry' (an ominous title), from whence the above canons are taken. Pope's was written at nineteen, and published at twenty-two."

To this passage Byron adds a long foot-note, or *pièce justificative*, as follows:—

"As a balance to these lines, and to the sense and sentiment of the new school, I will put down a passage or two from Pope's *earliest* poems, taken at random:—

'Envy her own snakes shall feel,
And Persecution mourn her broken wheel,
There Faction roar, Rebellion bite her chain,
And gasping Furies thirst for blood in vain.'

'Ah! what avails his glossy varying dyes,
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes;
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold.'

'Round broken columns clasping ivy twined,
O'er heaps of ruin stalk'd the stately hind;
The fox obscene to gaping tombs retires,
And savage howlings fill the sacred quires.'

'Hail, bards triumphant! born in happier days;
Immortal heirs of universal praise!
Whose honours with increase of ages grow
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow;
Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!
Oh may some spark of your celestial fire,
The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,
(That on weak wings, from far pursues your flights;
Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes),
To teach vain wits a science little known,
T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own!'

'Amphion there the loud creating lyre
Strikes, and behold a sudden Thebes aspire!
Cithæron's echoes answer to his call,
And half the mountain rolls into a wall.'

'So Zembla's rocks, the beauteous work of frost,
Rise white in air, and glitter o'er the coast;
Pale suns, unfelt, at distance roll away,
And on th' impassive ice the lightnings play;
Eternal snows the growing mass supply,
Till the bright mountains prop the incumbent sky,
As Atlas fix'd, each hoary pile appears,
The gather'd winter of a thousand years.

'Thus, when we view some well-proportion'd dome,
The world's just wonder, and even thine, O Rome!
No single parts unequally surprise,
All comes united to the' admiring eyes:
No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appear;
The whole at once is bold and regular.'

"A thousand similar passages crowd upon me, all composed by Pope before his *two-and-twentieth* year; and yet it is contended that he is no poet, and we are told so in such lines as I beg the reader to compare with these *youthful* verses of the 'no-poet.' Must we repeat the question of Johnson, '*If Pope is not a poet, where is poetry to be found?*' Even in *descriptive* poetry, the *lowest* department of the art, he will be found, on a fair examination, to surpass any living writer."

On the 12th of October 1820, Byron wrote to Mr. Murray, finding fault with a consignment of books, stating what he would have liked, and adding—

"Instead of this, here are Johnny Keats's * * poetry, and three novels by God knows whom . . . There is such a trash of Keats and the like upon my tables that I am ashamed to look at them . . . No more Keats, I entreat:—flay him alive;—if some of you don't, I must skin him myself. There is no bearing the drivelling idiotism of the manikin."

In a letter to Murray dated the 18th of November 1820, he writes—

"Of the praises of that little * * * Keats—I shall observe as Johnson did when Sheridan the actor got a *pension*: 'What! has *he* got a pension? Then it is time I should give up *mine*!' Nobody could be prouder of the praise of the Edinburgh than I was, or more alive to their censure, as I showed in English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. At present *all the men* they have ever praised are degraded by that insane article. Why don't they review and praise 'Solomon's Guide to Health?' it is better sense and as much poetry as Johnny Keats."

The name of Keats does not occur, as far as I am aware, in the *Letter to John Murray, Esq. on the Rev. W. L. Bowles's Strictures on the Life and Writings of Pope,* which Byron published in 1821; nor, for that matter, does the *name* occur in the *Observations upon "Observations"—A Second Letter to John Murray, Esq. on the Rev. W. L. Bowles's Strictures on the Life and Writings of Pope,* which, though dated the 25th of March 1821, was not published till 1832, when it appeared in Volume VI of the Works. But although Keats's name does not appear there, the following paragraph (pages 411-12) applies to him and is assigned to his name in the index to the edition. It follows some remarks on Leigh Hunt:—

"With the rest of his young people I have no acquaintance, except through some things of theirs (which have been sent out without my desire), and I confess that till I had read them I was not aware of the full extent of human absurdity. Like Garrick's 'Ode to Shakspeare,' *they* '*defy criticism.*' These are of the personages who decry Pope. One of them, a Mr. John Ketch, has written some lines against him, of which it were better to be the subject than the author. Mr. Hunt redeems himself by occasional beauties; but the rest of these poor creatures seem so far gone that I would not 'march through Coventry with them, that's flat!' were I in Mr. Hunt's place. To be sure, he has 'led his ragamuffins where they will be well peppered;' but a system-maker must receive all sorts of proselytes. When they have really seen life—when they have felt it—when they have travelled beyond the far distant boundaries of the wilds of Middlesex—when they have overpassed the Alps of Highgate, and traced to its sources the Nile of the New River—then, and not till then, can it be properly permitted to them to despise Pope; who had, if not *in Wales*, been *near* it, when he described so beautifully the '*artificial*' works of the Benefactor of Nature and mankind, the 'Man of Ross,' whose picture, still suspended in the parlour of the inn, I have so often contemplated with reverence for his memory, and admiration of the poet, without whom even his own still existing good works could hardly have preserved his honest renown."

In a letter to Murray dated the 26th of April 1821, Byron wrote—

"Is it true, what Shelley writes me, that poor John Keats died at Rome of the Quarterly Review? I am very sorry for it, though I think he took the wrong line as a poet, and was spoilt by Cockneyfying, and suburbing, and versifying Tooke's Pantheon and Lempriere's Dictionary. I know, by experience, that a savage review is hemlock to a sucking author; and the one on me (which produced the English Bards, &c.) knocked me down—but I got up again. Instead of bursting a blood-vessel, I drank three bottles of claret, and began an answer, finding that there was nothing in the article for which I could lawfully knock Jeffrey on the head, in an honourable way. However, I would not be the person who wrote that homicidal article for all the honour and glory in the world; though I by no means approve of that school of scribbling which it treats upon."

On the same day he wrote to Shelley—

"I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats—is it *actually* true? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances, I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow! though with such inordinate self-love he would probably have not been very happy. I read the review of 'Endymion' in the Quarterly. It was severe,—but surely not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals upon others.

* * * * *

"I have published a pamphlet on the Pope controversy, which you will not like. Had I known that Keats was dead—or that he was alive and so sensitive—I should have omitted some remarks upon his poetry, to which I was provoked by his *attack* upon *Pope*, and my disapprobation of his *own style* of writing."

I presume the pamphlet referred to as published was the *Observations upon "Observations"* (see page 266) which he had sent for publication, but did not issue after all.

A letter to Mr. Murray dated the 30th of July 1821 (Works, Volume V, pages 212-13) has in a postscript the following remarks and versicles:—

"Are you aware that Shelley has written an Elegy on Keats, and accuses the Quarterly of killing him?

'Who kill'd John Keats?'
  'I,' says the Quarterly,
  So savage and Tartarly;
''Twas one of my feats.'

'Who shot the arrow?'
  'The poet-priest Milman
  (So ready to kill man),
Or Southey or Barrow.'

"You know very well that I did not approve of Keats's poetry, or principles of poetry, or of his abuse of Pope; but, as he is dead, omit *all* that is said *about him* in any MSS. of mine, or publication. His Hyperion is a fine monument, and will keep his name. I do not envy the man who wrote the article;—you Review people have no more right to kill than any other footpads. However, he who would die of an article in a Review would probably have died of something else equally trivial. The same thing nearly happened to Kirke White, who died afterwards of a consumption."

The editors of the seventeen-volume edition of Byron's works did not regard the injunction in the foregoing letter, but, rightly or wrongly, published all the allusions here cited. It is something to put to the credit side of Byron's account that he issued such a mandate; but a disposition to spare the feelings of the living would have been still more creditable.

On the 12th of November 1821 (not, of course, 1831 as printed in Lord Houghton's *Life and Letters* of Keats) Byron appears to have written in a copy of the suppressed pamphlet, against the remarks on Keats, the following note in mitigation:

"Mr. Keats died at Rome about a year after this was written, of a decline produced by his having burst a blood-vessel on reading the article on his 'Endymion' in the Quarterly Review. I have read the article before and since; and although it is bitter, I do not think that a man should permit himself to be killed by it. But a young man little dreams what he must inevitably encounter in the course of a life ambitious of public notice. My indignation at Mr. Keats's depreciation of Pope has hardly permitted me to do justice to his own genius, which, malgré all the fantastic fopperies of his style, was undoubtedly of great promise. His fragment of 'Hyperion' seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as Æschylus. He is a loss to our literature; and the more so, as he himself, before his death, is said to have been persuaded that he had not taken the right line, and was re-forming his style upon the more classical models of the language."

In Medwin's *Conversations of Lord Byron: Noted during a Residence with his Lordship at Pisa, in the years 1821 and 1822,* there is a snatch of talk about Keats which may probably belong to a later date than any of these written deliverances. The record stands just before that of Medwin's departure from Pisa on the 15th of March 1822 (pages 293-5 of the "new edition," in octavo, of 1824); and, if the book were systematically put together, it would be reasonable to assign the conversation to the first half of that month. It is probably reported without any great inaccuracy; and is as follows:—

"During our evening ride the conversation happened to turn upon the rival Reviews.

"'I know no two men,' said he, 'who have been so infamously treated as Shelley and Keats ... In consequence of the shameless personality of ... the Quarterly, every one abuses Shelley,—his name is coupled with every thing that is opprobrious: ... Then as to Keats, though I am no admirer of his poetry, I do not envy the man, whoever he was, that attacked and killed him. Except a couplet of Dryden's,

> "On his own bed of torture let him lie,
> Fit garbage for the hell-hound infamy,"

I know no lines more cutting than those in 'Adonais,' or more feeling than the whole elegy.'

"'As Keats is now gone, we may speak of him. I am always battling with *the Snake* about Keats, and wonder what he finds to make a god of, in that idol of the Cockneys: besides, I always ask Shelley why he does not follow his style, and make himself one of the school, if he think it so divine. He will, like me, return some day to admire Pope, and think "The Rape of the Lock" and its sylphs worth fifty "Endymions," with their faun and satyr machinery. I remember Keats somewhere says that "flowers would not blow, leaves bud," &c. if man and woman did not kiss. How sentimental!'

"I remarked that 'Hyperion' was a fine fragment, and a proof of his poetical genius.

"'Hyperion!' said he: 'why a man might as well pretend to be rich who had one diamond. 'Hyperion' indeed! 'Hyperion' to a satyr! Why, there is a fine line in Lord Thurlow (looking to the West that was gloriously golden with the sunset) which I mean to borrow some day:

> "And all that gorgeous company of clouds"—

Do you think they will suspect me of taking from Lord Thurlow?' "

The data for an appreciation of Byron's attitude towards Keats would be incomplete without the ribald fifty-ninth stanza of the eleventh Canto of *Don Juan*, which has been yoked with Shelley's immortal Elegy to draw down the track of years the false notion that adverse criticism killed Keats:—

> "John Keats, who was kill'd off by one critique,
> Just as he really promised something great,
> If not intelligible, without Greek
> Contrived to talk about the Gods of late,
> Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
> Poor fellow! His was an untoward fate;
> 'T is strange the mind, that very fiery particle,[1]
> Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article."

Although Hunt assured Byron that this view was not accurate (see pages 292-3), we must recollect, in justice to Byron's candour in the matter, that Shelley gave him to understand differently, and of Shelley Byron thought more highly than of almost anyone—certainly more highly than of Hunt.

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[1] "Divinæ particulum auræ." [BYRON'S NOTE.]

IV.

NOTICE OF KEATS

EXTRACTED FROM LEIGH HUNT'S

LORD BYRON AND SOME OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

KEATS, when he died, had just completed his four-and-twentieth year. He was under the middle height; and his lower limbs were small in comparison with the upper, but neat and well-turned. His shoulders were very broad for his size: he had a face, in which energy and sensibility were remarkably mixed up, an eager power checked and made patient by ill-health. Every feature was at once strongly cut, and delicately alive. If there was any faulty expression, it was in the mouth,

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This informal memoir, originally entitled *Mr. Keats—With a Criticism on his writings*, was published in 1828 in Hunt's goodly illustrated quarto, *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries; with Recollections of the Author's Life, and of his Visit to Italy.* Portions of the section relating to Keats were revised in later years and inserted in Hunt's Autobiography, in which some additional remarks relating to Keats were published in consequence of the issue meanwhile of the *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains* under the editorship of Lord Houghton (then Mr. R. Monckton Milnes). The text of the original memoir issued in 1828 is here given with such revisions of phrase &c. as Hunt made in the passages which he reprinted: I have omitted throughout the prefix *Mr.* to the names of various poets, as he omitted them in the later version; and I have left out such of his extracts as could be spared without injury to the force of the context. Certain minor additions are inserted from the Autobiography within square brackets; and the substantive addenda, which was not without something of a character of pugnacity. His face was rather long than otherwise; the upper lip projected a little over the under; the chin was bold, the cheeks sunken; the eyes mellow and glowing; large, dark and sensitive. At the recital of a noble action, or a beautiful thought, they would suffuse with tears, and his mouth trembled.[1] In this, there was ill health as well

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taken from Mr. Thornton Hunt's edition of 1860, are placed at the end in a separate group. The portrait of Keats as given in the quarto of 1828 was "engraved by Henry Meyer after a sketch drawn from life by Severn." Mr. Severn wrote to me some years ago that he considered the Meyer print (executed though it was in a very charming way) to be "a caricature of Keats"; and, as it varies in some essential points from the beautiful original, a charcoal drawing now in the Forster Collection at the South Kensington Museum, I have had a fac-simile produced by the photo-intaglio process,—the frontispiece to Volume II.

[1] At this point it will be interesting to insert, more especially on account of the reminiscence at the close, the following passage from the *Life and Letters* (1867), page 12:—"Mr. Felton Mathew, to whom his first published Epistle was addressed, had introduced him to agreeable society, both of books and men, and those verses were written just at the time when Keats became fully aware that he had no real interest in the profession he was sedulously pursuing, and was already in the midst of that sad conflict between the outer and inner worlds, which is too often, perhaps in some degree always, the Poet's heritage in life. That freedom from the bonds of conventional phraseology which so clearly designates true genius, but which, if unwatched and unchastened, will continually outrage the perfect form that can alone embalm the beautiful idea and preserve it for ever, is there already manifest, and the presence of Spenser shows itself not only by quaint expressions and curious adaptations of rhyme, but by the introduction of the words 'and make a sunshine in a shady place,' applied to the power of the Muse. Mr. Mathew retains his impression that at that time 'the eye of Keats was more critical than tender, and so was his mind: he admired more the external decorations than felt the deep emotions of the Muse. He delighted in leading you through the mazes of elaborate description, but was less conscious of the sublime and the pathetic. He used to spend many evenings in reading to me, but I never

as imagination, for he did not like these betrayals of emotion; and he had great personal as well as moral courage. [He once chastised a butcher, who had been insolent, by a regular stand-up fight.[1]] His hair, of a brown colour, was fine, and hung in natural ringlets. The head was a puzzle for the phrenologists, being remarkably small in the skull; a singularity which he had in common with Byron and Shelley, whose hats I could not get on. Keats was sensible of the disproportion above noticed, between his upper and lower extremities; and he would look at his hand, which was faded, and swollen in the veins, and say it was the hand of a man of fifty. He was a seven month's child: his mother, who was a lively woman, passionately fond of amusement, is supposed to have hastened her death by too great an inattention to hours and seasons. Perhaps she hastened that of her son.[2] His father died of a fall from his horse in the year 1804.[3]

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observed the tears in his eyes nor the broken voice which are indicative of extreme sensibility.' This modification of early sensibility by the growing preponderance of the imagination is a frequent phenomenon in poetical pyschology."

[1] See the account of this in Clarke's Recollections.

[2] This is not quite a fair suggestion. If this sort of thing is to be taken into account in a quasi-scientific manner, let us confess frankly that we know so little of the conditions which give rise to or foster genius that, supposing certain antenatal conditions to have cut short Keats's life, we cannot say what bearing those same conditions had upon his genius. If we do not know whether Mrs. Keats's imprudence resulted in a short-lived progeny, we are equally ignorant whether a longer-lived one more normally brought into the world might not have lacked the very genius which has made the world deplore the poet's early death.

[3] Here is the account of the accident published at the time in *The Gentleman's Magazine* under the head of deaths:—"[April] 15. Mr. Keats, livery-stable-keeper in Moorfields. He went to dine at Southgate; returned at a late hour, and, on passing down

Keats's origin was of the humblest description; he was born October 29, 1796, at a livery-stables in Moorfields, of which his grandfather was the proprietor.[1] I am very incurious, and did not know this till the other day. He never spoke of it, perhaps out of a personal soreness which the world had exasperated. After receiving the rudiments of a classical education at Mr. Clarke's school at Enfield, he was bound apprentice to Mr. Hammond, a surgeon, in Church-street, Edmonton; and his enemies

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the City road, his horse fell with him, when he had the misfortune to fracture his skull. It was about one o'clock in the morning when the watchman found him; he was then alive, but speechless; the watchman got assistance, and took him to a house in the neighbourhood, where he died about eight o'clock [on the morning of the 16th of April 1804]."

[1] Both as to origin and as to date some qualification is here necessary. Clarke's Recollections furnish a correction; but by way of foot-note the following passage from the *Life and Letters* is appropriate here as putting the matter on a more proper footing:

"The interest which attaches to the family of every remarkable individual has failed to discover in that of Keats anything more than that the influences with which his childhood was surrounded were virtuous and honourable. His father, who was employed in the establishment of Mr. Jennings, a proprietor of large livery-stables on the Pavement in Moorfields, nearly opposite the entrance into Finsbury Circus, became his master's son-in-law, and is still remembered as a man of excellent natural sense, lively and energetic countenance, and entire freedom from any vulgarity or assumption on account of his prosperous alliance. He was killed by a fall from his horse in 1804, at the early age of thirty-six. The mother, a lively intelligent woman, was supposed to have prematurely hastened the birth of John by her passionate love of amusement, though his constitution gave no signs of the peculiar debility of a seventh months child. He was born on the 29th of October, 1795. This point, which has been disputed, (Mr. Leigh Hunt making him a year younger,) is decided by the proceedings in Chancery, on the administration of his effects, where he is said to have come of age in October, 1816. Rawlings *v.* Jennings, June 3rd, 1825."

having made a jest even of this, he did not like to be reminded of it; at once disdaining them for their meanness, and himself for being sick enough to be moved by them. Mr. Clarke, junior, his schoolmaster's son, a reader of genuine discernment, had encouraged with great warmth the genius that he saw in the young poet; and it was to Mr. Clarke I was indebted for my acquaintance with him. I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the exuberant specimens of genuine though young poetry that were laid before me, and the promise of which was seconded by the fine fervid countenance of the writer. We became intimate on the spot, and I found the young poet's heart as warm as his imagination. We read and walked together, and used to write verses of an evening upon a given subject. No imaginative pleasure was left unnoticed by us, or unenjoyed; from the recollection of the bards and patriots of old, to the luxury of a summer rain at our window, or the clicking of the coal in winter-time. Not long afterwards, having the pleasure of entertaining at dinner Godwin, Hazlitt, and Basil Montague, I showed them the verses of my young friend, and they were pronounced to be as extraordinary as I thought them. One of them was that noble sonnet on first reading Chapman's Homer, which terminates with so energetic a calmness, and which completely announced the new poet taking possession. As Keats's first juvenile volume is not much known, I will repeat the sonnet here,[1] as a remarkable instance of a vein prematurely masculine.

Modern criticism has made the public well acquainted with the merits of Chapman. The retainers of some schools of poetry may not see very far into his old oracular style; but the poets themselves (the true test of poetical merit) have always felt the impression. Waller professed that he could never read him without a movement of transport; and Pope, in the preface to his translation, says that he was animated by a daring fiery spirit, something like what we may conceive of Homer himself "before he arrived at years of discretion." Chapman certainly stands upon no ceremony. He blows as rough a blast as Achilles could have desired to hear, very different from the soft music of a parade. "The whales exult" under his Neptune, playing unwieldy gambols; and his Ulysses issues out of the shipwreck, "soaked to the very heart;" tasting of sea-weeds and salt-water, in a style that does not at all mince the matter, or consult the proprieties of Brighton. Keats's epithets of "loud and bold," showed that he understood him thoroughly. The men of Cortez staring at each other, and the eagle eyes of their leader looking out upon the Pacific, have been thought too violent a picture for the dignity of the occasion; but it is a case that requires the exception. Cortez's "eagle eyes" are a piece of historical painting, as the reader may see by Titian's portrait of him. The last line,

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[1] He does so, italicizing lines 9, 10, and 14.

"Silent—upon a peak in Darien,"

makes the mountain a part of the spectacle, and supports the emotion of the rest of the sonnet upon a basis of gigantic tranquillity.

The volume containing this sonnet was published in 1817, when the author was in his twenty-first year.[1] The poem with which it begins, was suggested to him by a delightful summer-day, as he stood beside the gate that leads from the Battery on Hampstead Heath into a field by Caen Wood; and the last poem, the one *On Sleep and Poetry* was occasioned by his sleeping in one of the cottages in the Vale of Health, the first one that fronts the valley, beginning from the same quarter. I mention these things, which now look trivial, because his readers will not think them so twenty years hence. It was in the beautiful lane, running from the road between Hampstead and Highgate to the foot of Highgate Hill, that, meeting me one day, he first gave me the volume. If the admirer of Keats's poetry does not know the lane in question, he ought to become acquainted with it, both on his author's account and its own. It has been also paced by Lamb and Hazlitt, and frequented, like the rest of the beautiful neighbourhood, by Coleridge; so that instead of Millfield Lane, which is the name it is known by "on earth," it has sometimes been called Poets' Lane, which is an appellation it richly deserves. It divides the grounds of Lords Mansfield and Southampton, running through trees and sloping meadows, and being rich in the botany for which this part of the neighbourhood of London has always been celebrated. I recommend it, contrary to the interests of my solitude; but the mischief done me by sociality pleases me, as usual, still better.

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[1] According to the clear evidence produced by Lord Houghton as to the date of Keats's birth (page 276), we must here read *twenty-second* for *twenty-first*.

"A drainless shower
Of light is poesy; 'tis the supreme of power;
'*Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.*"

These are some more of the lines in a book, in which feeble critics thought they saw nothing but feebleness. Here are four more, out of a profusion of mixed youth and beauty:—the writer is speaking of some engraved portraits, that adorned the room he slept in:—

"Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes,
As if he always listen'd to the sighs
Of the goaded world: and Kosciusko's, worn
With horrid suff'rance,—*mightily forlorn.*"

But there were political opinions in the book; and these not according with the opinions of the then government authorities, the writer was found to be a very absurd person, and not to be borne. His youth, and the sincerity natural to youth, to say nothing of personal predilections, which are things that nobody has a right to indulge in but the affectionate followers of office, all told against instead of for him in the eyes of a servile weakness, jealous of independence in others, and (to say the truth) not very capable of discerning the greatest talent. To admire and comment upon the genius that two or three hundred years have applauded, and to discover what will partake of the applause two or three hundred years hence, are processes of a very different description. Accordingly, when Keats, in 1818, published his next volume, his poetic romance entitled *Endymion*, the critical authority, then reigning at the west end, showed it no mercy. What completed the matter was, that his publisher, in a fright, went to the critic to conciliate him; as if the greater and more insolent the opportunity of trampling, the petty tyrant would not be the happier to seize it. Gifford gave his visitor very plainly to understand that such would be the case. Such it was; and though the bookseller, who in reality had a better taste than the critic, and very properly felt piqued to support his author, stood by him in the publication of another volume, the sale of both volumes was neutralized in that gratuitous acquiescence with the critics, in which the public have since learnt not to be quite so trusting.

Endymion, it must be allowed, was not a little calculated to perplex the critics. It was a wilderness of sweets, but it was truly a wilderness; a domain of young, luxuriant, uncompromising poetry, where the "weeds of glorious feature" hampered the petty legs accustomed to the lawns and trodden walks, in vogue for the last hundred years; lawns, as Johnson says, "shaven by the scythe, and levelled with the roller;" walks, which, being public property, have been re-consecrated, like Kensington Gardens, by the beadles of authority, instead of the Pans and Sylvans. Wordsworth knew better than the critics, but he did not choose to say any thing. He stood upon equivocal footing himself, his greatest poetical recommendation arising from the most prosaical action of his life, to wit, his acceptance of the office of Distributor of Stamps. Keats, meeting him one day at Haydon's,—the same day when Lamb said that good thing about Voltaire,[1]—our young poet was induced to repeat to the older one the Hymn to Pan out of *Endymion*; upon which Wordsworth said it was a "very pretty piece of Paganism." A new poet had come up, who

> "Had sight of Proteus coming from the sea;"

and certainly "the world was not too much with him." But this, which is a thing desired by Lake Poets in their abstractions, is a presumption in the particular, and not to be countenanced. "Such sights as youthful poets dream" must cease, when their predecessors grow old; when they get jealous as fading beauties, and have little annuities for behaving themselves.

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[1] For the "good thing" in question, Hunt refers to his Memoir of Lamb, in which (page 297 of the quarto) we read as follows:—"To a person abusing Voltaire, and indiscreetly opposing his character to that of Jesus Christ, he said admirably well, (though he by no means overrates Voltaire, nor wants reverence in the other quarter,) that 'Voltaire was a very good Jesus Christ *for the French*.'" See Haydon's account, further on.

The great fault of *Endymion*, next to its unpruned luxuriance, (or before it, rather, for it was not a fault on the right side,) was the wilfulness of its rhymes. The author had a just contempt for the monotonous termination of every-day couplets; he broke up his lines in order to distribute the rhyme properly; but going only upon the ground of his contempt, and not having yet settled with himself any principle of versification, the very exuberance of his ideas led him to make use of the first rhymes that offered; so that, by a new meeting of extremes, the effect was as artificial, and much more obtrusive than the one under the old system. Dryden modestly confessed, that a rhyme had often helped him to a thought. Keats, in the tyranny of his wealth, forced his rhymes to help him, whether they would or not; and they obeyed him, in the most singular manner, with equal promptitude and ungain[li]ness. *Endymion*, too, was not without its faults of weakness, as well as of power. Keats's natural tendency to pleasure, as a poet, sometimes degenerated, by reason of his ill health, into a poetical effeminacy. There are symptoms of it here and there in all his productions, not excepting the gigantic grandeur of Hyperion. His lovers grow "faint" with the sight of their mistresses; and Apollo, when he is superseding his divine predecessor, and undergoing his transformation into a Divus Major, suffers a little too exquisitely among his lilies. But Keats was aware of this contradiction to the real energy of his nature, and prepared to get rid of it. What is more, he said as much in the Preface to *Endymion*, and in a manner calculated to conciliate all critics who were worth touching his volume; but not such were those, from whom the public were to receive their notions of him. Let the reader see it, and wish, if he has hitherto read nothing but criticism upon him, that he had seen it before.[1]

An organized system of abuse had come up at this period, of a nature with which it was thought no department of literature had hitherto been polluted. The mistake was natural, after a long interval of decorum; but similar abuses have always taken place, when society was not better occupied, or when jealousy and party spleen paid an adversary the compliment of thinking itself sufficiently provoked. A shelf full of scandal might be collected against Dryden and Pope. "The life of a wit," said Steele, "is a warfare upon earth;" and he had good reason to know it. There was a man of the name of Baker, who made it his business to assail him with criticisms and personalities. The wits themselves too often assailed one another, and in a manner worthy of their calumniators, of which there is humiliating evidence in the lives of Addison and Swift. Even Shakspeare was not without his libeller. Somebody in his time accused him, in common with his fellow playwrights, of irreligion, —nay, of personal arrogance, and of taking himself for the only "Shake-scene" of the theatre. The new taste in calumny, however, surpassed all the other, by its avowed contempt for truth and decency. It seemed to think, that by an excess of impudence it would confound objection, and even bully itself out of the last lingerings of conscience; and the public, who were mean enough to enjoy what they condemned, enabled the plot to succeed. The lowest and falsest personalities were a trifle. Privacies were invaded, in a way to make the stoutest hearts tremble for the gentlest and most pitiable; and with an instinct common to the despicable, every delicacy was taken advantage of, that could secure impunity to offence. Even cowardice itself was avowed as a thing profitable. In short, never before was seen such a conspiracy between a reckless love of importance, cold calculation, and party and private resentment. Not being tied down by hard logic or Calvinism, the Scotch, it was said, were resolved to show how difficult it was for them to understand any other principle. Having no throats to cut as Jacobites or Puritans, they must run a muck as Drawcansirs in literature. Not being able to be Reevers of Westburn Flat, they were to plunder people of their characters, and warm the chill poverty of their imaginations at the blushes and distresses of private life.[1] Unfortunately, some of the knaves were not destitute of talent: the younger were tools of older ones, who kept out of sight.[2]

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[1] Hunt here inserts the preface to *Endymion*.

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Sir Walter Scott calls this, I believe, a re-action in favour of legitimate ideas. Legitimate ideas are obliged to him for the compliment, and are very much his humble servants: but I doubt whether the Government of 1828 will agree with him, as the Pittites did; and a present Government is a great thing, as the Reviewers have found out. Your absent deity is nothing to your *præsens divus*.

The contrivers of this system of calumny thought that it suited their views, trading, political, and personal, to attack the writer of the present work. They did so, and his friends with him, Keats among the number. Had the hostility been fair, I was a fair object of attack, having not only taken a warm part in politics, but in a very thoughtless and immature spirit attacked people critically, Sir Walter among them. But then I did it openly: my books were not published without a name; and word was always left at the Examiner office, where I was to be found, in case explanation was demanded of any thing I wrote in the paper. I therefore treated these anonymous assailants with indifference in the first instance, and certainly should not have noticed them at all, had not another person chosen to call upon them in my name. Circumstances then induced me to make a more peremptory call: it was not answered; and the two parties retreated, they into their meanness, and I into my contempt. I have since regretted, on Keats's account, that I did not take a more active part. The scorn which the public and they would feel for one another, before long, was evident enough; but, in the mean time, an injury, in every point of view, was done to a young and sensitive nature, to which I ought to have been more alive. The truth was, I never thought about it; nor, I believe, did he, with a view to my taking any farther notice. I was in the habit, though a public man, of living in a world of abstractions of my own, and I regarded him as a nature still more abstracted, and sure of unsought renown. Though I was a politician, (so to speak) I had scarcely a political work in my library. Spensers and Arabian Tales filled up the shelves; and Spenser himself was not remoter in my eyes, from all the commonplaces of life, than my new friend. Our whole talk was made up of idealisms. In the streets we were in the thick of the old woods. I little suspected, as I did afterwards, that the hunters had struck him; [and never at any time did I suspect that he could have imagined it desired by his friends;] that a delicate organization, which already anticipated a premature death, made him feel his ambition thwarted by these fellows; and that the very impatience of being impatient was resented by him, and preyed on his mind. Had he said but a word to me on the subject, I would have kept no measures with them. There were delicacies on other subjects, which I had leave to merge in greater ones, had I chosen it; and, in a case like this, it should have been done.

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[1] I confess that one Burns or one Thomson is enough to sweeten all Scotland in my imagination; which is saying a good deal, after what Edinburgh has done for it. [HUNT'S NOTE.]

[2] The omission at this point is not mine, but Hunt's own.

In every thing but this reserve, which was [to a certain extent] encouraged by my own incuriousness, (for I have no reserve myself with those whom I love,)—in every other respect but this, Keats and I might have been taken for friends of the old stamp, between whom there was no such thing [even] as obligation, except the pleasure of it. [I could not love him as deeply as I did Shelley. That was impossible. But my affection was only second to the one which I entertained for that heart of hearts. Keats, like Shelley himself,] enjoyed the usual privilege of greatness with all whom he knew, rendering it delightful to be obliged by him, and an equal, but not greater, delight to oblige. It was a pleasure to his friends to have him in their houses, and he did not grudge it. When *Endymion* was published, he was living at Hampstead with his friend Charles Armitage Brown, who attended him most affectionately through a severe illness, and with whom, to their great mutual enjoyment, he had taken a journey into Scotland.[1] The lakes and mountains of the North delighted him exceedingly. He beheld them with an epic eye. Afterwards, he went into the South, and luxuriated in the Isle of Wight. On Brown's leaving home a second time, to visit the same quarter, Keats, who was too ill to accompany him, came to reside with me, when his last and best volume of poems appeared, containing *Lamia*, *Isabella*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and the noble fragment of *Hyperion*. I remember Charles Lamb's delight and admiration on reading this book; how pleased he was with the designation of Mercury as "the star of Lethe" (rising, as it were, and glittering, as he came upon that pale region); with the fine daring anticipation in that passage of the second poem,—

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[1] This would seem to imply that the journey to Scotland had been

> "So the two brothers and *their murdered man*
> Rode past fair Florence."

So also with the description, at once delicate and gorgeous, of Agnes praying beneath the painted window. This last (which should be called, *par excellence*, the Prayer at the Painted Window) has been often quoted; but for the benefit of those who are not yet acquainted with the author's genius, farther than by means of these pages, I cannot resist repeating it. It throws a light upon one's book.[1]

The whole volume is worthy of this passage. Keats

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undertaken before *Endymion* was published; but such, of course, was not the case. *Endymion* came out in the Spring of 1818, when Keats was at Teignmouth, whereas the Scotch tour took place in the following Summer, and the residence with Brown at Hampstead was later—after Tom's death.

[1] Hunt quotes stanzas XXIV and XXV, save the last line and a half, omitted, no doubt, on account of the faintness of Porphyro related therein. By "Agnes praying beneath the painted window," he of course means "Madeline praying" &c.

is no half-painter, who has only distinct ideas occasionally, and fills up the rest with commonplaces. He feels all as he goes. In his best pieces, every bit is precious; and he knew it, and laid it on as carefully as Titian or Giorgione. Take a few more samples.

LOVERS.

"Parting they seem'd to tread upon the air,
Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart,
Only to meet again more close, and share
The inward fragrance of each other's heart."

BEES.

"Bees, the little almsmen of spring bowers."

A DELICATE SUPPER.

"And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep
In blanched linen, smooth and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon."

[The public are now well acquainted with these and other passages,] for which Persian kings would have filled a poet's mouth with gold. I remember Keats reading these lines to me with great relish and particularity, conscious of what he had set forth. The melody is as sweet as the subject, especially at

"Lucent syrops tinct with cinnamon,"

and the conclusion. Wordsworth would have said that the vowels were not varied enough; but Keats knew where his vowels were *not* to be varied. On the occasion above alluded to, Wordsworth found fault with the repetition of the concluding sound of the participles in Shakspeare's line about bees:—

> "The *singing* masons *building* roofs of gold."

This, he said, was a line which Milton would never have written. Keats thought, on the other hand, that the repetition was in harmony with the continued note of the singers, and that Shakspeare's negligence (if negligence it was) had instinctively felt the thing in the best manner. The assertion about Milton is startling, considering the tendency of that great poet to subject his nature to art; yet I have dipped, while writing this, into *Paradise Lost*, and at the second chance have lit on the following:

> "The gray
> Dawn, and the Pleiades before him danced,
> Shedding sweet influence. Less bright the moon,
> But opposite, *in levelled west, was set*
> His mirrour, with full force borrowing her light."

The repetition of the *e* in the fourth line is an extreme case in point, being monotonous in order to express oneness and evenness.

Milton would have relished the supper which his young successor, like a page for him, has set forth. It was Keats who observed to me, that Milton, in various parts of his writings, has shown himself a bit of an epicure, and loves to talk of good eating. That he was choice in his food, and set store by a good cook, there is curious evidence to be found in the proving of his Will; by which it appears, that dining one day "in the kitchen," he complimented Mrs. Milton, by the appropriate title of "Betty," on the dish she had set before him; adding, as if he could not pay her too well for it, "Thou knowest I have left thee all." Henceforth let a kitchen be illustrious, should a gentleman choose to take a cutlet in it.

But houses and their customs were different in those days.

CALAMITIES FOLLOWING CALAMITIES.

"There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if its vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, *and the sullen rear*
Was with its stored thunder labouring up."

This is out of the fragment of *Hyperion*, which is truly like the fragment of a former world. There is a voice in it grander than any that has been uttered in these times, except in some of Wordsworth's sonnets; though the author, in a noble verse, has règretted its inadequacy to his subject.

"Oh how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods!"

OAKS CHARMED BY THE STARS.

"As when upon a tranced summer-night,
Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
So came these words and went."

A GOD RECLINING IN SORROW.

"And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretch'd himself, in grief and radiance faint."

THE ELDER GODS DETHRONED.

"Mnemosyne was straying in the world;
Far from her throne had Phœbe wandered;
And many else were free to roam abroad;
But for the main here found they covert drear,
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,

Lay vast and edgeways; *like a dismal cirque*
Of Druid stones upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night."

But I shall fill my book with quotations. A criticism, entering more into the nature of the author's genius, may be found by any one who wishes to see it, in the *Indicator.*[1] One or two passages, however, in the fine lyrical pieces in this volume, must be noticed. One is on a sculptured vase, representing a procession with music; upon which the author says, with an intensity of sentiment, at once original in the idea, and going home, like an old thought, to the heart—

"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou can'st not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss;
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair."

Upon this beautiful passage, a sapient critic observed, that he should like to know how there could be music unheard. The reader will be more surprised to know who it was that asked what was the meaning, in the following ode, of a beaker, "*full of the warm south.*" As Keats's poems are in few hands, compared to what they will be, I will not apologize for transcribing the whole of a beautiful poem, which in a very touching manner falls in with the poetical biography of the author, having been composed by him while he lay sleepless and suffering under the illness which he felt to be mortal.[1]

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[1] Hunt's notice of Keats's last volume will be found reprinted entire in the Appendix to Volume II.

It was Lord Byron, at that time living in Italy, drinking its wine, and basking in its sunshine, who asked me what was the meaning of a beaker "full of the warm south." It was not the word beaker that puzzled him. College had made him intimate enough with that. But the sort of poetry in which he excelled, was not accustomed to these poetical concentrations. At the moment also, he was willing to find fault, and did not wish to discern an excellence different from his own. When I told him, that Keats admired his *Don Juan*, he expressed both surprise and pleasure, and afterwards mentioned him with respect in a canto of it.[2] He could not resist, however, making undue mention of one of the causes that affected his health. A good rhyme about *particle* and *article* was not to be given up.[3] I told him he was mistaken in attributing Keats's death to the critics, though they had perhaps hastened, and certainly embittered it; and he promised to alter the passage: but a joke and a rhyme together! Those Italian shrugs of the shoulders, which I hope will never be imported among us, are at once a lamentation and an excuse for every thing; and I cannot help using one here. At all events, I have kept my promise, to make the erratum myself in case it did not appear.

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[1] Here follows, in the original quarto, the whole of the *Ode to a Nightingale.*

[2] Whatever his admiration may have been, it was not, I think, fraught with any undue weight of respect. See the expression "Lord Byron's last flash poem" in the Winchester Letter to George Keats (page 11 of this volume), and again the passage from the *Life and Letters* quoted at page 107, in the foot-note, where we are told how Keats threw *Don Juan* on the floor "in a transport of indignation" at the description of the storm, and exclaimed upon the "paltry originality which consists in making solemn things gay, and gay things solemn, and yet will fascinate thousands, by the very diabolical outrage of their sympathies." As to the respect on the other side, Heaven preserve us from such respect! But the reader can judge for himself by referring to Appendix III.

[3] As this point is of some consequence, I subjoin the account of the affair as revised in the Autobiography:—"When I was in Italy, Lord Byron showed me in manuscript the well-known passage in *Don Juan*, in which Keats's death is attributed to the *Quarterly Review;* the couplet about the 'fiery particle,' that was 'snuffed out by an article.' I told him the real state of the case, proving to

Keats had felt that his disease was mortal, two or three years before he died. He had a constitutional tendency to consumption; a close attendance to the death-bed of a beloved brother, when he ought to have been nursing himself in bed, gave it a blow which he felt for months; [Despairing love (that is to say, despairing of living to enjoy it, for the love was returned) added to its hourly torment;] and, meanwhile, the hostile[1] critics came up, and roused an indignation in him, both against them and himself, which [on so many accounts] he could ill afford to endure. All this trouble was secretly aggravated by a very tender circumstance, which I can but allude to thus publicly, and which naturally subjected one of the warmest hearts and imaginations that ever existed, to all the pangs, that doubt, succeeded by delight, and delight, succeeded by hopelessness in this world, could inflict. Seeing him once change countenance in a manner more alarming than usual, as he stood silently eyeing the country out of window,[2] I pressed him to let me know

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him that the supposition was a mistake, and therefore, if printed, would be a misrepresentation. But a stroke of wit was not to be given up."

[1] In the original quarto *rascally*, a not inappropriate word for the occasion.

[2] See the letter to Brown in which (page 111) mention is

how he felt, in order that he might enable me to do what I could for him: upon which he said, that his feelings were almost more than he could bear, and that he feared for his senses. I proposed that we should take a coach, and ride about the country together, to vary, if possible, the immediate impression, which was sometimes all that was formidable, and would come to nothing. He acquiesced, and was restored to himself. It was nevertheless on the same day, sitting on the bench in Well Walk, at Hampstead, nearest the heath,[1] that he told me, with unaccustomed tears in his eyes, that "his heart was breaking." A doubt, however, was upon him at the time, which he afterwards had reason to know was groundless; and during his residence at the last house[2] that he occupied before he went abroad, he was at times more than tranquil. At length Keats was persuaded by his friends to try the milder climate of Italy. He thought it better for others as well as himself that he should go. He was accompanied by Mr. Severn, then a young artist of promise equal to his subsequent repute, who possessed all that could recommend him for a companion,—old acquaintanceship, great animal spirits, active tenderness, and a mind capable of appreciating that of the poet. They went first to Naples, and afterwards to Rome; where, on the 23rd of February, 1821, our author died in the arms of his friend, completely worn out, and longing for the

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made of something so like this that probably the occasion was the same.

[1] Hunt says in a foot-note—"The one against the wall." Let no one suppose it was the one that is in the poor transformed Well Walk of today. "Keats's seat" has been renewed several times within the memory of people less advanced in years than "the oldest inhabitant."

[2] Mrs. Brawne's, at Wentworth Place.

release. He suffered so much in his lingering, that he used to watch the countenance of the physician for the favourable and fatal sentence, and express his regret when he found it delayed. Yet no impatience escaped him. He was manly and gentle to the last, and grateful for all services. A little before he died, he said that he "felt the daisies growing over him." But he made a still more touching remark respecting his epitaph. "If any," he said, "were put over him, he wished it to consist of nothing but these words: 'Here lies one, whose name was writ in water:'"—so little did he think of the more than promise he had given;—of the fine and lasting things he had added to the stock of poetry. The physicians expressed their astonishment that he had held out so long, the lungs turning out, on inspection, to have been almost obliterated. They said he must have lived upon the mere strength of the spirit within him. He was interred in the English burying-ground at Rome, near the monument of Caius Cestius, where his great mourner, Shelley, was shortly to join him.

So much for the mortal life of as true a man of genius as these latter times have seen; one of those who are too genuine and too original to be properly appreciated at first, but whose time for applause will infallibly arrive with the many, and has already begun in all poetical quarters. I venture to prophesy, as I have done elsewhere, that Keats will be known hereafter in English literature, emphatically, as *the Young Poet;* and that his volumes will be the sure companions, in field and grove, of all those who know what a luxury it is to hasten, with a favourite volume against one's heart, out of the strife of commonplaces into the haven of solitude and imagination.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS FROM HUNT'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

AND now to speak of Keats, who was introduced to me by his schoolmaster's son, Charles Cowden Clarke, a man of a most genial nature and corresponding poetical taste, admirably well qualified to nourish the genius of his pupil.

I had not known the young poet long, when Shelley and he became acquainted under my roof. Keats did not take to Shelley as kindly as Shelley did to him.[1] Shelley's only thoughts of his new acquaintance were such as regarded his bad health, with which he sympathized, and his poetry, of which he has left such a monument of his admiration in *Adonais*. Keats, being a little too sensitive on the score of his origin, felt inclined to see in every man of birth a sort of natural enemy. Their styles in writing also were very different; and Keats, notwithstanding his unbounded sympathies with ordinary flesh and blood, and even the transcendental cosmopolitics of *Hyperion*, was so far inferior in universality to his great acquaintance, that he could not accompany him in his dædal rounds with nature, and his Archimedean endeavours to move the globe with his own hands. I am bound to state thus much; because, hopeless of recovering his health, under circumstances that made the feeling extremely bitter, an irritable morbidity appears even to have driven his suspicions to excess; and this not only with regard to the acquaintance whom he might reasonably suppose to have had some advantages over him, but to myself, who had none; for I learned the other day, with extreme pain, such as I am sure so kind and reflecting a man as Mr. Monckton Milnes would not have inflicted on me could he have foreseen it, that Keats at one period of his intercourse with us suspected both Shelley and myself of a wish to see him undervalued![1] Such are the tricks which constant infelicity can play with the most noble natures. For Shelley, let *Adonais* answer. For myself, let every word answer which I uttered about him, living and dead, and such as I now proceed to repeat. I might as well have been told that I wished to see the flowers or the stars undervalued, or my own heart that loved him.

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[1] There can scarcely be a doubt that this was the case. Whatever may have been the reason, there is more reserve in the utterances of Keats to and of Shelley than there is in those of Shelley to and of Keats; and the incomplete letter Number XXII, to George and Thomas Keats, leaves an impression of something actively unpleasant kept back. Let us hope the ominous asterisks (page 100, Volume III) after an expression of grudging pity stand for something less injurious than it is natural to suppose.

But it was sickness, and passed away. It appears, by Mr. Milnes' book, that all his friends dissatisfied him in the course of those trials of his temper; and my friend,

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[1] See Volume III, page 108. Surely Lord Houghton was perfectly right in leaving Keats's words intact, and giving Hunt and his admirers timely opportunity to establish the truth. Had the same course been followed in regard to the missing passages on "poor Shelley," we should perhaps have had the opportunity to clear off another misapprehension. This particular delusion of Keats's so far as it regards his true friend Hunt has so often been reiterated as a novel discovery by people who know nothing of the matter and are not honest enough to instruct themselves upon it, that I have gladly seized the opportunity of scattering through the illustrative portions of these volumes the very considerable mass of Hunt's deliverances concerning Keats living and dead. I think they will be found to form a tolerably strong answer to all the ridiculous accusations of half-heartedness.

Mr. Milnes, will allow me to say, that those Letters and Remains of the young poet were not among his happiest effusions, nor wanting to supply a certain force of character to his memory. That memory possessed force enough already for those who were qualified to discern it; and those who were not, hardly deserved to have their own notions of energy flattered at the poet's expense. Keats was already known to have personally chastised a blackguard, and to have been the author of *Hyperion*:

> "That large utterance of the early gods."

What more could have been necessary to balance the trembling excess of sensibility in his earlier poems? The world has few enough incarnations of poets themselves in Arcadian shapes, to render necessary any deterioration of such as it has the luck to possess.

But perhaps my own personal feelings induce me to carry this matter too far. In the publication alluded to is a contemptuous reference (not by Mr. Milnes) to a paper in the *Examiner* on the season of Christmas. I turned to it with new feelings of anxiety; and there I found no warrant for such reference, unless a certain tone of self-complacency, so often regretted in this autobiography, can have justified it.

Keats appears to have been of opinion that I ought to have taken more notice of what the critics said against him. And perhaps I ought. My notices of them may not have been sufficient. I may have too much contented myself with panegyrizing his genius, and thinking the objections to it of no ultimate importance. Had he given me a hint to another effect, I should have acted upon it. But in truth, as I have before intimated, I did not see a twentieth part of what was said against us; nor had I the slightest notion, at that period, that he took criticism so much to heart.

* * * * *

I have endeavoured, in another publication,[1] to characterize the poetry of Keats, both in its merits and defects. It is not necessary to repeat them here. The public have made up their minds on the subject; and such of his first opponents as were men of genius themselves, but suffered their perceptions to be obscured by political prejudice, (as who has not in such time?) have long agreed with, or anticipated the verdict. Sir Walter Scott confessed to Mr. Severn at Rome, that the truth respecting Keats had prevailed; and it would have been strange, indeed, when the heat of the battle was over, had not Christopher North stretched out his large and warm hand to his memory. Times arrive, under the hallowing influences of thought and trouble, when genius is as sure to acknowledge genius, as it is to feel its own wants, and to be willing to share its glory. A man's eyes, the manlier they are, perceive at last, that there is nothing nobler in them than their tears.

It was during my intimacy with Keats that I published a hasty set of miscellaneous poems, under the title of *Foliage*, and wrote the set of essays that have since become popular under that of the *Indicator*.

* * * * *

It was not at Hampstead that I first saw Keats. It was in York Buildings, in the New Road (No. 8), where I wrote part of the *Indicator*—and he resided with me while in Mortimer Terrace, Kentish Town (No. 13), where I concluded it. I mention this for the curious in such things; among whom I am one.

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[1] The other publication, as Hunt states in a note, was *Imagination and Fancy*. The criticism referred to will be found in the Appendix to Volume II of this edition, pages 542-6, and in the foot-notes to *The Eve of St. Agnes* in the same volume. These cullings are on the whole the best and most enjoyable of Hunt's writings about Keats.

V.

RECOLLECTIONS OF KEATS

BY CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE,

extracted from *Recollections of Writers* by Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke.

IN the village of Enfield, in Middlesex, ten miles on the North road from London, my father, John Clarke, kept a school. The house had been built by a West India merchant in the latter end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century. It was of the better character of the domestic architecture of that period, the whole front being of the purest red brick, wrought by means of moulds into rich designs of flowers and pomegranates, with heads of cherubim over niches in the centre of the building. The elegance of the design and the perfect finish of the structure were such as to secure its protection when a branch railway was brought from the Ware and Cambridge line to Enfield. The old school-house was converted into the station-house, and the railway company had the good taste to leave intact one of the few remaining specimens of the graceful English architecture of long-gone days.

These Recollections as given in the volume produced jointly by Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke (1878) were reprinted with some slight changes from *The Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1874; and a less mature version had appeared some years before that in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Here it was that John Keats all but commenced and did complete his school education. He was born on the 29th of October, 1795; and he was one of the little fellows who had not wholly emerged from the child's costume upon being placed under my father's care. It will be readily conceived that it is difficult to recall from the "dark backward and abysm" of seventy-odd years the general acts of perhaps the youngest individual in a corporation of between seventy and eighty youngsters; and very little more of Keats's child-life can I remember than that he had a brisk, winning face, and was a favourite with all, particularly my mother. His maternal grandfather, Jennings, was proprietor of a large livery-stable, called the "Swan and Hoop," on the pavement in Moorfields, opposite the entrance into Finsbury Circus. He had two sons at my father's school: the elder was an officer in Duncan's ship off Camperdown. After the battle, the Dutch admiral, De Winter, pointing to young Jennings, told Duncan that he had fired several shots at that young man, and always missed his mark;—no credit to his steadiness of aim, for Jennings, like his own admiral, was considerably above the ordinary dimensions of stature.

Keats's father was the principal servant at the Swan and Hoop stables—a man of so remarkably fine a common-sense, and native respectability, that I perfectly remember the warm terms in which his demeanour used to be canvassed by my parents after he had been to visit his boys. John was the only one resembling him in person and feature, with brown hair and dark hazel eyes. The father was killed by a fall from his horse in returning from a visit to the school. This detail may be deemed requisite when we see in the last memoir of the poet the statement that "John Keats was born on the

29th of October, 1795, in the upper rank of the middle class."[1] His two brothers—George, older,[2] and Thomas, younger than himself—were like the mother, who was tall, of good figure, with large oval face, and sensible deportment. The last of the family was a sister—Fanny, I think, much younger than all,—and I hope still living —of whom I remember, when once walking in the garden with her brothers, my mother speaking of her with much fondness for her pretty and simple manners. She married Mr. Llanos, a Spanish refugee, the author of "Don Esteban," and "Sandoval, the Freemason." He was a man of liberal principles, very attractive bearing, and of more than ordinary accomplishments.

In the early part of his school-life John gave no extraordinary indications of intellectual character; but it was remembered of him afterwards, that there was ever present a determined and steady spirit in all his undertakings: I never knew it misdirected in his required pursuit of study. He was a most orderly scholar. The future ramifications of that noble genius were then closely shut in the seed, which was greedily drinking in the moisture which made it afterwards burst forth so kindly into luxuriance and beauty.

My father was in the habit, at each half-year's vacation, of bestowing prizes upon those pupils who had performed the greatest quantity of voluntary work; and such was Keats's indefatigable energy for the last two or three successive half-years of his remaining at school, that, upon each occasion, he took the first prize by a considerable distance. He was at work before the first school-hour began, and that was at seven o'clock; almost all the intervening times of recreation were so devoted; and during the afternoon holidays, when all were at play, he would be in the school—almost the only one—at his Latin or French translation; and so unconscious and regardless was he of the consequences of so close and persevering an application, that he never would have taken the necessary exercise had he not been sometimes driven out for the purpose by one of the masters.

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[1] This expression occurs in the Memoir prefixed to the edition of Keats's Poetical Works published by Messrs. Moxon and Co. in 1863. Lord Houghton omitted it in later publications; and it was certainly not to be found in "the last memoir" of those current in 1874 when these Recollections were published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.

[2] They were both younger than John. It was perhaps the fact that George was the bigger boy which led to the idea that he was the elder; but there is no doubt on the point.

It has just been said that he was a favourite with all. Not the less beloved was he for having a highly pugnacious spirit, which, when roused, was one of the most picturesque exhibitions—off the stage—I ever saw. One of the transports of that marvellous actor, Edmund Kean—whom, by the way, he idolized—was its nearest resemblance; and the two were not very dissimilar in face and figure. Upon one occasion, when an usher, on account of some impertinent behaviour, had boxed his brother Tom's ears, John rushed up, put himself in the received posture of offence, and, it was said, struck the usher—who could, so to say, have put him into his pocket. His passion at times was almost ungovernable; and his brother George, being considerably the taller and stronger, used frequently to hold him down by main force, laughing when John was in "one of his moods," and was endeavouring to beat him. It was all, however, a wisp-of-straw conflagration; for he had an intensely tender affection for his brothers, and proved it upon the most trying occasions. He was not merely the "favourite of all," like a pet prize-fighter, for his terrier courage; but his high-mindedness, his utter unconsciousness of a mean motive, his placability, his generosity, wrought so general a feeling in his behalf, that I never heard a word of disapproval from any one, superior or equal, who had known him.

In the latter part of the time—perhaps eighteen months—that he remained at school, he occupied the hours during meals in reading. Thus, his *whole* time was engrossed. He had a tolerably retentive memory, and the quantity that he read was surprising. He must in those last months have exhausted the school library, which consisted principally of abridgments of all the voyages and travels of any note; Mavor's collection, also his "Universal History;" Robertson's histories of Scotland, America, and Charles the Fifth; all Miss Edgeworth's productions, together with many other works equally well calculated for youth. The books, however, that were his constantly recurrent sources of attraction were Tooke's "Pantheon," Lemprière's "Classical Dictionary," which he appeared to *learn*, and Spence's "Polymetis." This was the store whence he acquired his intimacy with the Greek mythology; here was he "suckled in that creed outworn;" for his amount of classical attainment extended no farther than the "Æneid;" with which epic, indeed, he was so fascinated that before leaving school he had *voluntarily* translated in writing a considerable portion. And yet I remember that at that early age—mayhap under fourteen—notwithstanding, and through all its incidental attractiveness, he hazarded the opinion to me (and the expression riveted my surprise), that there was feebleness in the structure of the work. He must have gone through all the better publications in the school library, for he asked me to lend him some of my own books; and, in my "mind's eye," I now see him at supper (we had our meals in the school room), sitting back on the form, from the table, holding the folio volume of Burnet's "History of his Own Time" between himself and the table, eating his meal from beyond it. This work, and Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*—which my father took in, and I used to lend to Keats—no doubt laid the foundation of his love of civil and religious liberty. He once told me, smiling, that one of his guardians, being informed what books I had lent him to read, declared that if he had fifty children he would not send one of them to that school. Bless his patriot head!

When he left Enfield, at fourteen years of age, he was apprenticed to Mr. Thomas Hammond, a medical man, residing in Church Street, Edmonton, and exactly two miles from Enfield. This arrangement evidently gave him satisfaction, and I fear that it was the most placid period of his painful life; for now, with the exception of the duty he had to perform in the surgery—by no means an onerous one—his whole leisure hours were employed in indulging his passion for reading and translating. During his apprenticeship he finished the "Æneid.".[1]

The distance between our residences being so short, I gladly encouraged his inclination to come over when he could claim a leisure hour; and in consequence I saw him about five or six times a month on my own leisure afternoons. He rarely came empty-handed; either he had a book to read, or brought one to be exchanged. When the weather permitted, we always sat in an arbour at the end of a spacious garden, and—in Boswellian dialect—"we had good talk."

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[1] I do not know positively whether this means that he finished reading it or finished translating it,—probably translating; but I have not discovered whether the translation is extant. It would probably be in prose; and it is hardly to be supposed that its interest would be other than biographical.

It were difficult, at this lapse of time, to note the spark that fired the train of his poetical tendencies; but he must have given unmistakable tokens of his mental bent; otherwise, at that early stage of his career, I never could have read to him the "Epithalamion" of Spenser; and this I remember having done, and in that hallowed old arbour, the scene of many bland and graceful associations—the substances having passed away. At that time he may have been sixteen years old; and at that period of life he certainly appreciated the general beauty of the composition, and felt the more passionate passages; for his features and exclamations were ecstatic. How often, in after-times, have I heard him quote these lines:—

> "Behold, while she before the altar stands,
> Hearing the holy priest that to her speaks,
> And blesses her with his two happy hands,
> How the red roses flush up to her cheeks!
> And the pure snow, with goodly vermeil stain,
> Like crimson dyed in grain,
> That even the angels, which continually
> About the sacred altar do remain,
> Forget their service, and about her fly,
> *Oft peeping in her face, that seems more fair,*
> *The more they on it stare;*
> But her sad eyes, still fasten'd on the ground,
> Are governèd with goodly modesty,
> That suffers not one look to glance awry,
> Which may let in a little thought unsound."

That night he took away with him the first volume of the "Faerie Queene," and he went through it, as I formerly told his noble biographer, "as a young horse would through a spring meadow—ramping!" Like a true poet, too—a poet "born, not manufactured," a poet in grain, he especially singled out epithets, for that felicity and power in which Spenser is so eminent. He *hoisted* himself up, and looked burly and dominant, as he said, "What an image that is—'*sea-shouldering whales!*'" It was a treat to see as well as hear him read a pathetic passage. Once when reading the "Cymbeline" aloud, I saw his eyes fill with tears, and his voice faltered when he came to the departure of Posthumus, and Imogen saying she would have watched him—

"'Till the diminution
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle;
Nay, follow'd him till he had *melted from*
The smallness of a gnat to air; and then
Have turn'd mine eye and wept."

I cannot remember the precise time of our separating at this stage of Keats's career, or which of us first went to London; but it was upon an occasion, when walking thither to see Leigh Hunt, who had just fulfilled his penalty of confinement in Horsemonger Lane Prison for the unwise libel upon the Prince Regent, that Keats met me; and, turning, accompanied me back part of the way. At the last field-gate, when taking leave, he gave me the sonnet entitled, "Written on the Day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison." This I feel to be the first proof I had received of his having committed himself in verse; and how clearly do I recall the conscious look and hesitation with which he offered it! There are some momentary glances by beloved friends that fade only with life. His biographer has stated that "The Lines in Imitation of Spenser"—

"Now Morning from her orient chamber came,
And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill," &c.,

are the earliest known verses of his composition; a probable circumstance, from their subject being the inspiration of his first love, in poetry—and such a love!—but Keats's first *published* poem was the sonnet—

"O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell," &c.

This sonnet appeared in the *Examiner* some time, I think, in 1816.[1]

When we both had come to London—Keats to enter as a student of St. Thomas's Hospital—he was not long in discovering my abode, which was with a brother-in-law in Clerkenwell; and at that time being housekeeper, and solitary, he would come and renew his loved gossip; till, as the author of the "Urn Burial" says, "we were acting our antipodes—the huntsmen were up in America, and they already were past their first sleep in Persia." At the close of a letter which preceded my appointing him to come and lighten my darkness in Clerkenwell, is his first address upon coming to London. He says,—

"Although the Borough is a beastly place in dirt, turnings, and windings, yet No. 8, Dean Street, is not difficult to find; and if you would run the gauntlet over London Bridge, take the first turning to the right, and, moreover, knock at my door, which is nearly opposite a meeting, you would do me a charity, which, as St. Paul saith, is the father of all the virtues. At all events, let me hear from you soon: I say, at all events, not excepting the gout in your fingers."

This letter, having no date but the week's day, and no postmark, preceded our first symposium; and a memorable night it was in my life's career.

A beautiful copy of the folio edition of Chapman's translation of Homer had been lent me. It was the property of Mr. Alsager, the gentleman who for years had contributed no small share of celebrity to the great reputation of the *Times* newspaper by the masterly manner in which he conducted the money-market department of that journal. Upon my first introduction to Mr. Alsager he lived opposite to Horsemonger Lane Prison, and upon Mr. Leigh Hunt's being sentenced for the libel, his first day's dinner was sent over by Mr. Alsager.

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[1] See Volume I, page 71.

Well, then, we were put in possession of the Homer of Chapman, and to work we went, turning to some of the "famousest" passages, as we had scrappily known them in Pope's version. There was, for instance, that perfect scene of the conversation on Troy wall of the old Senators with Helen, who is pointing out to them the several Greek Captains; with the Senator Antenor's vivid portrait of an orator in Ulysses, beginning at the 237th line of the third book:—

"But when the prudent Ithacus did to his counsels rise,
He stood a little still, and fix'd upon the earth his eyes,
His sceptre moving neither way, but held it formally,
Like one that vainly doth affect. Of wrathful quality,
And frantic (rashly judging), you would have said he was;
But when out of his ample breast he gave his great voice pass,
And words that flew about our ears like drifts of winter's snow,
None thenceforth might contend with him, though naught
admired for show."

The shield and helmet of Diomed, with the accompanying simile, in the opening of the third book; and the prodigious description of Neptune's passage to the Achive ships, in the thirteenth book:—

"The woods and all the great hills near trembled beneath the
weight
Of his immortal-moving feet. Three steps he only took,
Before he far-off Ægas reach'd, but with the fourth, it shook
With his dread entry."

One scene I could not fail to introduce to him—the shipwreck of Ulysses, in the fifth book of the "Odysseis," and I had the reward of one of his delighted stares, upon reading the following lines:—

"Then forth he came, his both knees falt'ring, both
His strong hands hanging down, and all with froth
His cheeks and nostrils flowing, voice and breath
Spent to all use, and down he sank to death.
The sea had soak'd his heart through; all his veins
His toils had rack'd t' a labouring woman's pains.
Dead-weary was he."

On an after occasion I showed him the couplet, in Pope's translation, upon the same passage:—

"From mouth and nose the briny torrent ran,
And *lost in lassitude lay all the man.*" [! ! !]

Chapman[1] supplied us with many an after-treat; but it was in the teeming wonderment of this his first introduction, that, when I came down to breakfast the next morning, I found upon my table a letter with no other enclosure than his famous sonnet, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer." We had parted, as I have already said, at day-spring, yet he contrived that I should receive the poem from a distance of, may be, two miles by ten o'clock. In the published copy of this sonnet he made an alteration in the seventh line:—

"Yet did I never breathe its pure serene."

The original which he sent me had the phrase—

"Yet could I never tell what men could mean;"

which he said was bald, and too simply wondering. No one could more earnestly chastise his thoughts than Keats. His favourite among Chapman's "Hymns of Homer" was the one to Pan, which he himself rivalled in the "Endymion":—

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[1] With what joy would Keats have welcomed Mr. Richard Hooper's admirable edition of our old version! [CLARKE'S NOTE.]

"O thou whose mighty palace-roof doth hang," &c.

It appears early in the first book of the poem; the first line in which has passed into a proverb, and become a motto to. Exhibition catalogues of Fine Art:—

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams," &c.

The "Hymn to Pan," alone should have rescued this young and vigorous poem—this youngest epic—from the savage injustice with which it was assailed.

In one of our conversations, about this period, I alluded to his position at St. Thomas's Hospital, coasting and reconnoitring, as it were, for the purpose of discovering what progress he was making in his profession; which I had taken for granted had been his own selection, and not one chosen for him. The total absorption, therefore, of every other mood of his mind than that of imaginative composition, which had now evidently encompassed him, induced me, from a kind motive, to inquire what was his bias of action for the future; and with that transparent candour which formed the mainspring of his rule of conduct, he at once made no secret of his inability to sympathize with the science of anatomy, as a main pursuit in life; for one of the expressions that he used, in describing his unfitness for its mastery, was perfectly characteristic. He said, in illustration of his argument, "The other day, for instance, during the lecture, there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray; and I was off with them to Oberon and fairyland."

And yet, with all his self-styled unfitness for the pursuit, I was afterwards informed that at his subsequent examination he displayed an amount of acquirement which surprised his fellow-students, who had scarcely any other association with him than that of a cheerful, crotchety rhymester. He once talked with me, upon my complaining of stomachic derangement, with a remarkable decision of opinion, describing the functions and actions of the organ with the clearness and, as I presume, technical precision of an adult practitioner; casually illustrating the comment, in his characteristic way, with poetical imagery: the stomach, he said, being like a brood of callow nestlings (opening his capacious mouth) yearning and gaping for sustenance; and, indeed, he merely exemplified what should be, if possible, the "stock in trade" of every poet, viz., to *know* all that is to be known, "in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth."

It was about this period that, going to call upon Mr. Leigh Hunt, who then occupied a pretty little cottage in the Vale of Health, on Hampstead Heath, I took with me two or three of the poems I had received from Keats. I could not but anticipate that Hunt would speak encouragingly, and indeed approvingly, of the compositions—written, too, by a youth under age; but my partial spirit was not prepared for the unhesitating and prompt admiration which broke forth before he had read twenty lines of the first poem. Horace Smith happened to be there on the occasion, and he was not less demonstrative in his appreciation of their merits. The piece which he read out was the sonnet, "How many Bards gild the Lapses of Time!" marking with particular emphasis and approval the last six lines:—

"So the unnumber'd sounds that evening store,
The songs of birds, the whisp'ring of the leaves,
The voice of waters, the great bell that heaves
With solemn sound, and thousand others more,
That distance of recognisance bereaves,
Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar."

Smith repeated with applause the line in italics, saying, "What a well-condensed expression for a youth so young!"[1] After making numerous and eager inquiries about him, personally, and with reference to any peculiarities of mind and manner, the visit ended in my being requested to bring him over to the Vale of Health.

That was a "red-letter day" in the young poet's life, and one which will never fade with me while memory lasts.

The character and expression of Keats's features would arrest even the casual passenger in the street; and now they were wrought to a tone of animation that I could not but watch with interest, knowing what was in store for him from the bland encouragement, and Spartan deference in attention, with fascinating conversational eloquence, that he was to encounter and receive. As we approached the Heath, there was the rising and accelerated step, with the gradual subsidence of all talk. The interview, which stretched into three "morning calls," was the prelude to many after-scenes and saunterings about Caen Wood and its neighbourhood; for

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[1] Although Horace Smith did not on this occasion express himself with his usual felicity, it will be admitted that the line is remarkable enough for condensation while curiously faulty in all other respects, and quite devoid of that happiness of expression which is so notably the character of Keats's work.

Keats was suddenly made a familiar of the household, and was always welcomed.

It was in the library at Hunt's cottage, where an extemporary bed had been made up for him on the sofa, that he composed the framework and many lines of the poem on "Sleep and Poetry"—the last sixty or seventy being an inventory of the art garniture of the room, commencing:—

> "It was a poet's house who keeps the keys
> Of Pleasure's temple."

In this composition is the lovely and favourite little cluster of images upon the fleeting transit of life—a pathetic anticipation of his own brief career:—

> "Stop and consider! Life is but a day;
> A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way
> From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep
> While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
> Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?
> Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;
> The reading of an ever-changing tale;
> The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;
> A pigeon tumbling in the summer air;
> A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,
> Riding the springy branches of an elm."

Very shortly after his installation at the cottage, and on the day after one of our visits, he gave in the following sonnet, a characteristic appreciation of the spirit in which he had been received:—

> "Keen fitful gusts are whispering here and there," &c.[1]

The glowing sonnet upon being compelled to "Leave Friends at an Early Hour"—

> "Give me a golden pen and let me lean," &c.,[2]

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[1] See Volume I, page 74. Clarke quotes the sonnet in full.

[2] See Volume I, page 80.

followed shortly after the former. But the occasion that recurs with the liveliest interest was one evening when—some observations having been made upon the character, habits, and pleasant associations with that reverend denizen of the hearth, the cheerful little grasshopper of the fireside—Hunt proposed to Keats the challenge of writing then, there, and to time, a sonnet "On the Grasshopper and Cricket." No one was present but myself, and they accordingly set to. I, apart, with a book at the end of the sofa, could not avoid furtive glances every now and then at the emulants. I cannot say how long the trial lasted. I was not proposed umpire; and had no stop-watch for the occasion. The time, however, was short for such a performance, and Keats won as to time. But the event of the after scrutiny was one of many such occurrences which have riveted the memory of Leigh Hunt in my affectionate regard and admiration for unaffected generosity and perfectly unpretentious encouragement. His sincere look of pleasure at the first line—

"The poetry of earth is never dead."

"Such a prosperous opening!" he said; and when he came to the tenth and eleventh lines:—

"On a lone winter evening, *when the frost*
Has wrought a silence—"

"Ah! that's perfect! Bravo Keats!" And then he went on in a dilatation upon the dumbness of Nature during the season's suspension and torpidity. With all the kind and gratifying things that were said to him, Keats protested to me, as we were afterwards walking home, that he preferred Hunt's treatment of the subject to his own. As neighbour Dogberry would have rejoined, "'Fore God, they are both in a tale!" It has occurred to me, upon so remarkable an occasion as the one here recorded, that a reunion of the two sonnets will be gladly hailed by the reader.[1]

Keats had left the neighbourhood of the Borough, and was now living with his brothers in apartments on the second floor of a house in the Poultry, over the passage leading to the Queen's Head Tavern, and opposite to one of the City Companies' halls—the Ironmongers', if I mistake not. I have the associating reminiscence of many happy hours spent in this abode. Here was determined upon, in great part written, and sent forth to the world, the first little, but vigorous, offspring of his brain:—*Poems by John Keats.*[2] And here, on the evening when the last proof-sheet was brought from the printer, it was accompanied by the information that if a "dedication to the book was intended it must be sent forthwith." Whereupon he withdrew to a side table, and in the buzz of a mixed conversation (for there were several friends in the room) he composed and brought to Charles Ollier, the publisher, the Dedication Sonnet to Leigh Hunt. If the original manuscript of that poem—a legitimate sonnet, with every restriction of rhyme and metre—could now be produced, and the time recorded in which it was written, it would be pronounced an extraordinary performance: added to which the non-alteration of a single word in the poem (a circumstance that was noted at the time) claims for it a merit with a very rare parallel. The remark may be here subjoined that, had the composition been previously prepared for the occasion, the mere writing it out would have occupied fourteen minutes; and lastly, when I refer to the time occupied in composing the sonnet on "The Grasshopper and the Cricket," I can have no hesitation in believing the one in question to have been extempore.

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[1] For the Sonnets, which Clarke quotes in full, see Volume I, pages 83 and 346.

[2] Clarke gives the title-page in full, "displayed."

"The poem which commences the volume," says Lord Houghton in his first memoir of the poet, "was suggested to Keats by a delightful summer's day, as he stood beside the gate that leads from the battery on Hampstead Heath into a field by Caen Wood"; and the following lovely passage he himself told me was the recollection of our having frequently loitered over the rail of a foot-bridge that spanned (probably still spans, notwithstanding the intrusive and shouldering railroad) a little brook in the last field upon entering Edmonton:—

"Linger awhile upon some bending planks
That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,
And watch intently Nature's gentle doings;
They will be found softer than ring-dove's cooings.
How silent comes the water round that bend!
Not the minutest whisper does it send
To the o'er-hanging sallows; blades of grass
Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass.
Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach
To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds;
Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Temper'd with coolness. *How they ever*[1] *wrestle*
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand!
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain;
But turn your eye and they are there again."

He himself thought the picture correct, and acknowledged to a partiality for it.

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[1] Clarke omits this word, and *sweet* in the next line.

Another example of his promptly suggestive imagination, and uncommon facility in giving it utterance, occurred one day upon returning home and finding me asleep on the sofa, with a volume of Chaucer open at the "Flower and the Leaf." After expressing to me his admiration of the poem, which he had been reading, he gave me the fine testimony of that opinion in pointing to the sonnet he had written at the close of it, which was an extempore effusion, and without the alteration of a single word. It lies before me now, signed "J. K., Feb., 1817." If my memory do not betray me, this charming out-door fancy scene was Keats's first introduction to Chaucer. The "Troilus and Cresseide" was certainly an after acquaintance with him; and clearly do I recall his approbation of the favourite passages that had been marked in my own copy. Upon being requested, he retraced the poem, and with his pen confirmed and denoted those which were congenial with his own feeling and judgment. These two circumstances, associated with the literary career of this cherished object of his friends' esteem and love, have stamped a priceless value upon that friend's miniature 18mo. copy of Chaucer.

The first volume of Keats's minor muse was launched amid the cheers and fond anticipations of all his circle. Every one of us expected (and not unreasonably) that it would create a sensation in the literary world; for such a first production (and a considerable portion of it from a minor) has rarely occurred. The three Epistles and the seventeen sonnets (that upon "first looking into Chapman's Homer" one of them) would have ensured a rousing welcome from our modern-day reviewers. Alas! the book might have emerged in Timbuctoo with far stronger chance of fame and approbation. It never passed to a second edition; the first was but a small one, and that was never sold off. The whole community, as if by compact, seemed determined to know nothing about it. The word had been passed that its author was a Radical; and in those days of "Bible-Crown-and-Constitution" supremacy, he might have had better chance of success had he been an Anti-Jacobin. Keats had not made the slightest demonstration of political opinion; but with a conscious feeling of gratitude for kindly encouragement, he had dedicated his book to Leigh Hunt, Editor of the *Examiner*, a Radical and a dubbed partisan of the first Napoleon; because, when alluding to him, Hunt did not always subjoin the fashionable cognomen of "Corsican Monster." Such an association was motive enough with the dictators of that day to thwart the endeavours of a young aspirant who should presume to assert for himself an unrestricted course of opinion. Verily, "the former times were *not* better than these." Men may now utter a word in favour of "civil liberty" without being chalked on the back and hounded out.

Poor Keats! he little anticipated, and as little merited, the cowardly treatment that was in store for him upon the publishing of his second composition—the "Endymion." It was in the interval of the two productions that he had moved from the Poultry, and had taken a lodging in Well Walk, Hampstead—in the first or second house on the right hand, going up to the Heath. I have an impression that he had been some weeks absent at the seaside before settling in this district; for the "Endymion" had been begun, and he had made considerable advances in his plan. He came to me one Sunday, and we passed the greater part of the day walking in the neighbourhood. His constant and enviable friend, Severn, I remember, was present upon the occasion, by a little circumstance of our exchanging looks upon Keats reading to us portions of his new poem with which he himself had been pleased; and never will his expression of face depart from me; if I were a Reynolds or a Gainsborough I could now stamp it for ever. One of his selections was the *now* celebrated "Hymn to Pan" in the first book:—

> "O thou whose mighty palace-roof doth hang
> From jagged trunks;"

which alone ought to have preserved the poem from unkindness; and which would have received an awarding smile from the "deep-brow'd" himself. And the other selections were the descriptions in the second book of the "bower of Adonis," and the ascent and descent of the silver car of Venus, air-borne:—

> "Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn,
> Spun off a drizzling dew."

Keats was indebted for his introduction to Mr. Severn to his schoolfellow Edward Holmes,[1] who also had been one of the child-scholars at Enfield; for he came there in the frock-dress.

Holmes ought to have been an educated musician from his first childhood, for the passion was in him. I used to amuse myself with the pianoforte after supper, when all had gone to bed. Upon some sudden occasion, leaving the parlour, I heard a scuffle on the stairs, and discovered that my young gentleman had left his bed to hear the music. At other times, during the day, in the intervals of school-hours, he would stand under the window listening. At length he entrusted to me his heart's secret, that he should like to learn music; when I taught him his tonic alphabet, and he soon knew and could do as much as his tutor. Upon leaving school, he was apprenticed to the elder Seeley, the bookseller; but, disliking his occupation, he left it, I think, before he was of age. He did not lose sight of his old master, and I introduced him to Mr. Vincent Novello, who had made himself a friend to me; and who, not merely with rare profusion of bounty gave Holmes instruction, but received him into his house and made him one of his family. With them he resided some years. I was also the fortunate means of recommending him to the chief proprietor of the *Atlas* newspaper; and to that journal, during a long period, he contributed a series of essays and critiques upon the science and practice of music, which raised the journal into a reference and an authority in the art. He wrote for the proprietors of the *Atlas* an elegant little book of dilettante criticism, "A Ramble among the Musicians in Germany." And in the latter period of his career he contributed to the *Musical Times* a whole series of masterly essays and analyses upon the masses of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. His own favourite production was a "Life of Mozart," in which he performed his task with considerable skill and equal modesty, contriving by means of the great musician's own letters to convert the work into an autobiography.

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[1] Severn says it was to Haslam. See page 375.

I have said that Holmes used to listen on the stairs. In after years, when Keats was reading to me the manuscript of "The Eve of St. Agnes," upon the repeating of the passage when Porphyro is listening to the midnight music in the hall below:—

"The boisterous midnight festive clarion,
The kettle-drum and far-heard clarionet,

Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone ;—"

"that line," said he, "came into my head when I remembered how I used to listen in bed to your music at school." How enchanting would be a record of the germs and first causes of all the greatest artists' conceptions! The elder Brunel's first hint for his "shield" in constructing the tunnel under the Thames was taken from watching the labour of a sea-insect, which, having a projecting hood, could bore into the ship's timber unmolested by the waves.

It may have been about this time that Keats gave a signal example of his courage and stamina, in the recorded instance of his pugilistic contest with a butcher-boy. He told me, and in his characteristic manner, of their "passage of arms." The brute, he said, was tormenting a kitten, and he interfered; when a threat offered was enough for his mettle, and they "set to." He thought he should be beaten, for the fellow was the taller and stronger; but like an authentic pugilist, my young poet found that he had planted a blow which "told" upon his antagonist; in every succeeding round, therefore (for they fought nearly an hour), he never failed of returning to the weak point, and the contest ended in the hulk being led home.

In my knowledge of fellow beings, I never knew one who so thoroughly combined the sweetness with the power of gentleness, and the irresistible sway of anger, as Keats. His indignation would have made the boldest grave; and they who had seen him under the influence of injustice and meanness of soul would not forget the expression of his features—"the form of his visage was changed." Upon one occasion, when some local tyranny was being discussed, he amused the party by shouting, "Why is there not a human dust-hole into which to tumble such fellows?"[1]

Keats had a strong sense of humour, although he was not, in the strict sense of the term, a humourist, still less a farcist.[2] His comic fancy lurked in the outermost and most unlooked-for images of association; which, indeed, may be said to form the components of humour; nevertheless, they did not exceed beyond the *quaint* in fulfilment and success. But his perception of humour, with the power of transmitting it by imitation, was both vivid and irresistibly amusing. He once described to me his having gone to see a bear-baiting, the animal the property of a Mr. Tom Oliver. The performance not having begun, Keats was near to, and watched, a young aspirant, who had brought a younger under his wing to witness the solemnity, and whom he oppressively patronised, instructing him in the names and qualities of all the magnates present. Now and then, in his zeal to manifest and impart his knowledge, he would forget himself, and stray beyond the prescribed bounds into the ring, to the lashing resentment of its comptroller, Mr. William Soames, who, after some hints of a practical nature to "keep back," began laying about him with indiscriminate and unmitigable vivacity, the Peripatetic signifying to his pupil, "My eyes! Bill Soames giv' me sich a licker!" evidently grateful, and considering himself complimented upon being included in the general dispensation. Keats's entertainment with and appreciation of this minor scene of low life has often recurred to me. But his concurrent personification of the baiting, with his position—his legs and arms bent and shortened till he looked like Bruin on his hind legs, dabbing his fore paws hither and thither, as the dogs snapped at him, and now and then acting the gasp of one that had been suddenly caught and hugged—his own capacious mouth adding force to the personation, was a remarkable and as memorable a display. I am never reminded of this amusing relation but it is associated with that forcible picture in Shakespeare, in "Henry VI.":—

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[1] In Haydon's *Correspondence and Table Talk* it is recorded (Volume II, page 287) that, "when walking in West-end fields, he said, 'Haydon, what a pity it is there is not a Human Dusthole!'"

[2] The distinction here drawn appears to me to be at the same time fine and just. In Keats's poetry there is no sign of humour; and the only intrusion of wit is in the worthless poem *The Cap and Bells*—where even the wit is of so thin a quality that it leaves no impression. In his admirable letters, on the other hand, humour of the most delightful kind is scattered up and down so plentifully, that I am bold to affirm he had no contemporary save Charles Lamb whose humour was of so sterling and rare a quality.

> ". . . As a bear encompass'd round with dogs,
> Who having *pinch'd* a few and *made them cry*,
> The rest stand all aloof and bark at him."

Keats also attended a prize-fight between the two most skilful "light weights" of the day, Randal and Turner; and in describing the rapidity of the blows of the one, while the other was falling, he tapped his fingers on the window pane.

I make no apology for recording these events in his life; they are characteristics of the natural man, and prove, moreover, that the partaking in such exhibitions did not for one moment blunt the gentler emotions of his heart, or vulgarize his inborn love of all that was beautiful and true. He would never have been a "slang gent," because he had other and better accomplishments to make him conspicuous. His own line was the axiom of his moral existence, his civil creed:

> "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,"

and I can fancy no coarser association able to win him from his faith. Had he been born in squalor he would have emerged a gentleman. Keats was not an easily swayable man; in differing with those he loved his firmness kept equal pace with the sweetness of his persuasion, but with the rough and the unloveable he kept no terms —within the conventional precincts, of course, of social order.

From Well Walk he moved to another quarter of the Heath, Wentworth Place, I think, the name. Here he became a sharing inmate with Charles Armitage Brown, a retired Russia merchant upon an independence and literary leisure. With this introduction their acquaintance commenced,[1] and Keats never had a more zealous, a firmer, or more practical friend and adviser than Armitage Brown. Mr. Brown brought out a work entitled, "Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems. Being his Sonnets clearly developed; with his Character drawn chiefly from his Works." It cannot be said that the author has clearly educed his theory; but, in the face of his failure upon the main point, the book is interesting for the heart-whole zeal and homage with which he has gone into his subject. Brown accompanied Keats in his tour in the Hebrides, a worthy event in the poet's career, seeing that it led to the production of that magnificent sonnet to "Ailsa Rock." As a passing observation, and to show how the minutest circumstance did not escape him, he told me that when he first came upon the view of Loch Lomond the sun was setting, the lake was in shade, and of a deep blue, and at the further end was "*a slash across it* of deep orange." The description of the traceried window in the "Eve of St. Agnes" gives proof of the intensity of his feeling for colour.

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[1] The would-be Boswell who accompanied Keats on his "tour to the Hebrides" had a longer acquaintance with the poet than this passage would seem to indicate. They were already intimate long before the Spring of 1818; in the Summer of that year they set out on their trip to the north; in December Tom Keats died at Well Walk; and *then* John Keats went "to domesticate with Brown" at Wentworth Place. It is expressly stated in Keats's letter to his sister dated the 13th of March 1819 (Volume III, page 290) that Brown was at that time "a friend...of two years standing."

It was during his abode in Wentworth Place,[1] that unsurpassedly savage attacks upon the "Endymion" appeared in some of the principal reviews—savage attacks, and *personally* abusive; and which would damage the sale of any magazine in the present day.

The style of the articles directed against the writers whom the party had nicknamed the "Cockney School" of poetry, may be conceived from its producing the following speech I heard from Hazlitt:[2] "To pay those fellows *in their own coin* the way would be to begin with Walter Scott, and *have at his clump foot.*" "Verily the former times were not better than these."

To say that these disgusting misrepresentations did not affect the consciousness and self-respect of Keats would be to underrate the sensitiveness of his nature. He did feel and resent the insult, but far more the *injustice* of the treatment he had received; and he told me so. They no doubt had injured him in the most wanton manner; but if they, or my Lord Byron, ever for one moment supposed that he was crushed or even cowed in spirit by the treatment he had received, never were they more deluded. "Snuffed out by an article," indeed! He had infinitely more magnanimity, in its fullest sense, than that very spoiled, self-willed, and mean-souled man—and I have unquestionable authority for the last term. To say nothing of personal and private transactions, Lord Houghton's observations, in his life of our poet, will be full authority for my estimate of Lord Byron. "Johnny Keats" had indeed "a little body with a mighty heart," and he showed it in the best way; not by fighting the "bush-rangers" in their own style—though he could have done that—but by the resolve that he would produce brain work which not one of their party could exceed; and he did, for in the year 1820 appeared the "Lamia," "Isabella," "Eve of St. Agnes," and the "Hyperion"—that illustrious fragment, which Shelley said "had the character of one of the antique desert fragments;" which Leigh Hunt called a "gigantic fragment, like a ruin in the desert, or the bones of the Mastodon;" and Lord Byron confessed that "it seemed actually inspired by the Titans, and as sublime as Æschylus."

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[1] If, as I presume, the reference is to the articles in *Blackwood's Magazine* and *The Quarterly Review*, it should be noted that both of them appeared before Keats went to live with Brown at Wentworth Place.

[2] Hazlitt had good grounds for anger on his own account. See Volume III, page 224, note.

All this wonderful work was produced in scarcely more than one year, manifesting—with health—what his brain could achieve; but, alas! the insidious disease which carried him off had made its approach, and he was preparing to go to, or had already departed for, Italy, attended by his constant and self-sacrificing friend Severn. Keats's mother died of consumption; and he nursed his younger brother, in the same disease, to the last; and, by so doing, in all probability hastened his own summons.

Upon the publication of the last volume of poems, Charles Lamb wrote one of his finely appreciative and cordial critiques in the *Morning Chronicle.*[1] At that period I had been absent for some weeks from London, and had not heard of the dangerous state of Keats's health; only that he and Severn were going to Italy; it was, therefore, an unprepared-for shock which brought me the news of his death in Rome.

Lord Houghton, in his 1848 and first "Biography of Keats," has related the anecdote of the young poet's introduction to Wordsworth, with the latter's appreciation of the "Hymn to Pan" (in the "Endymion"), which the author had been desired to repeat, and the Rydal-Mount poet's snow-capped comment upon it—"H'm! a pretty piece of Paganism!"[2] The lordly biographer, with his genial and placable nature, has made an amiable apology for the apparent coldness of Wordsworth's appreciation:—"That it was probably intended for some slight rebuke to his youthful compeer, whom he saw absorbed in an order of ideas that to him appeared merely sensuous, and would have desired that the bright traits of Greek mythology should be sobered down by a graver faith." Keats, like Shakespeare, and every other real poet, put his whole soul into what he had imagined, portrayed, or embodied; and hence he appeared the true young Greek. The wonder is that Wordsworth should have forgotten the quotation that might have been made from one of his own deservedly illustrious sonnets:—

> "The world is too much with us.
> . . . Great God! I'd rather be
> A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

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[1] I have been unable to find such a paper in *The Morning Chronicle* for 1820.

[2] See page 281 of this volume.

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn."

From Keats's description of his mentor's manner, as well as behaviour that evening, it would seem to have been one of the usual ebullitions of egoism, not to say of the uneasiness known to those who were accustomed to hear the great moral philosopher discourse upon his own productions, and descant upon those of a contemporary. During that same interview, some one having observed that the next Waverley novel was to be "Rob Roy," Wordsworth took down his volume of Ballads, and read to the company "Rob Roy's Grave;" then, returning it to the shelf, observed—"I do not know what more Mr. Scott can have to say upon the subject." Leigh Hunt, upon his first interview with Wordsworth, described his having lectured very finely upon his own writings, repeating the entire noble sonnet, "Great men have been among us"—"in a grand and earnest tone:" that rogue, Christopher North, added, "Catch him repeating any other than his own." Upon another and similar occasion, one of the party had quoted that celebrated passage from the play of "Henry V.," "So work the honey-bees;" and each proceeded to pick out his "pet plum" from that perfect piece of natural history; when Wordsworth objected to the line, "The singing masons building roofs of gold," because, he said, of the unpleasant repetition of "*ing*" in it! Why, where were his poetical ears and judgment? But more than once it has been said that Wordsworth had not a genuine love of Shakespeare: that, when he could, he always accompanied a "*pro*" with his "*con.*," and, Atticus-like, would "just hint a fault and hesitate dislike." Mr. James T. Fields, in his delightful volume of "Yesterdays with Authors," has an amiable record of his interview with Wordsworth; yet he has the following casual remark, "I thought he did not praise easily those whose names are indissolubly connected with his own in the history of literature. It was languid praise, at least, and I observed he hesitated for mild terms which he could apply to names almost as great as his own." Even Crabb Robinson more than once mildly hints at the same infirmity. "Truly are we *all* of a mingled yarn, good and ill together."

When Shelley left England for Italy Keats told me that he had received from him an invitation to become his guest, and, in short, to make one of his household.[1] It was upon the purest principle that Keats declined his noble proffer, for he entertained an exalted opinion of Shelley's genius—in itself an inducement; he also knew of his deeds of bounty, and, from their frequent social intercourse, he had full faith in the sincerity of his proposal; for a more crystalline heart than Shelley's has rarely throbbed in human bosom. He was incapable of an untruth, or of deceit in any form. Keats said that in declining the invitation his sole motive was the consciousness, which would be ever prevalent with him, of his being, in its utter extent, not a free agent, even within such a circle as Shelley's—he himself, nevertheless, being the most unrestricted of beings. Mr. Trelawney, a familiar of the family, has confirmed the unwavering testimony to Shelley's bounty of nature, where he says,—"Shelley was a being absolutely without selfishness." The poorest cottagers knew and benefited by his thoroughly *practical* and unselfish nature during his residence at Marlow, when he would visit them, and, having gone through a course of medical study in order that he might assist them with advice, would commonly administer the tonic, which such systems usually require, of a good basin of broth or pea-soup. And I believe that I am infringing on no private domestic delicacy when repeating that he has been known upon an immediate urgency to purloin—"*Convey* the wise it call"—a portion of the warmest of Mrs. Shelley's wardrobe to protect some poor starving sister. One of the richer residents of Marlow told me that "they all considered him a madman." I wish he had bitten the whole squad.

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[1] This would appear to be the incident referred to at page 82 of Volume III.

> "No settled senses of the world can match
> The 'wisdom' of that madness."

Shelley's figure was a little above the middle height, slender, and of delicate construction, which appeared the rather from a lounging or waving manner in his gait, as though his frame was compounded barely of muscle and tendon; and that the power of walking was an achievement with him and not a natural habit. Yet I should suppose that he was not a valetudinarian, although that has been said of him on account of his spare and vegetable diet: for I have the remembrance of his scampering and bounding over the gorse-bushes on Hampstead Heath late one night,—now close upon us, and now shouting from the height like a wild school-boy. He was both an active and an enduring walker—feats which do not accompany an ailing and feeble constitution. His face was round, flat, pale, with small features; mouth beautifully shaped; hair bright brown and wavy; and such a pair of eyes as are rarely in the human or any other head,—intensely blue, with a gentle and lambent expression, yet wonderfully alert and engrossing; nothing appeared to escape his knowledge.

Whatever peculiarity there might have been in Shelley's religious faith, I have the best authority for believing that it was confined to the early period of his life. The *practical* result of its course of *action*, I am sure, had its source from the "Sermon on the Mount." There is not one clause in that Divine code which his conduct towards his fellow mortals did not confirm and substantiate him to be—in action a follower of Christ. Yet, when the news arrived in London of the death of Shelley and Captain Williams by drowning near Spezzia, an evening journal of that day capped the intelligence with the following remark:—"He will now know whether there is a Hell or not." I hope there is not one journalist of the present day who would dare to utter that surmise in his record. So much for the progress of freedom and the power of opinion.

At page 100, Vol. I., of his first "Life of Keats," Lord Houghton has quoted a literary portrait which he received from a lady who used to see him at Hazlitt's lectures at the Surrey Institution. The building was on the south, right-hand side, and close to Blackfriars Bridge. I believe that the whole of Hazlitt's lectures on the British poets and the writers of the time of Elizabeth were delivered in that institution during the years 1817 and 1818; shortly after which the establishment appears to have been broken up. The lady's remark upon the character and expression of Keats's features is both happy and true. She says:—"His countenance lives in my mind as one of singular beauty and brightness; it had an expression *as if he had been looking on some glorious sight.*" That's excellent. "His mouth was full, and less intellectual than his other features." True again. But when our artist pronounces that "his eyes were large and *blue*," and that "his hair was *auburn*," I am naturally reminded of the "Chameleon" fable:—"They were *brown*, Ma'am—*brown*, I assure you!" The fact is, the lady was enchanted—and I cannot wonder at it—with the whole character of that beaming face; and "blue" and "auburn" being the favourite tints of the front divine in the lords of the creation the poet's eyes consequently became "blue" and his hair "auburn." Colours, however, vary with the prejudice or partiality of the spectator; and, moreover, people do not agree upon the most palpable prismatic tint. A writing-master whom we had at Enfield was an artist of more than ordinary merit, but he had one dominant defect, he could not distinguish between true blue and true green. So that, upon one occasion, when he was exhibiting to us a landscape he had just completed, I hazarded the critical question, why he painted his trees so *blue?* "Blue!" he replied, "What do you call green?" Reader, alter in your copy of the "Life of Keats," Vol. I., page 103, "eyes" *light hazel*, "hair" *lightish brown and wavy*.

The most perfect and favourite portrait of him was the one—the first—by Severn, published in Leigh Hunt's "Lord Byron and his Contemporaries," which I remember the artist sketching in a few minutes, one evening, when several of Keats's friends were at his apartments in the Poultry.[1] The portrait prefixed to the "Life" (also by Severn) is a most excellent one-look-and-expression likeness—an every-day and of "the earth, earthy" one; and the last, which the same artist painted, and which is now in the possession of Mr. John Hunter, of Craig Crook, Edinburgh, may be an equally felicitous rendering of one look and manner; but I do not intimately recognize it.[1] There is another and a curiously unconscious likeness of him in the charming Dulwich Gallery of Pictures. It is in the portrait of Wouvermans, by Rembrandt. It is just so much of a resemblance as to remind the friends of the poet, although not such a one as the immortal Dutchman would have made had the poet been his sitter. It has a plaintive and melancholy expression which, I rejoice to say, I do not associate with Keats.

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[1] This is the portrait in the Forster collection at the South Kensington Museum,—the frontispiece to Volume II; and "the portrait prefixed to the 'Life,'" is practically the same as the frontispiece to Volume I. Clarke also answers for the strong resemblance of the drawing made by Severn just before Keats's death (the frontispiece to the present volume); for in 1876 he assured me that it was "a marvellously correct likeness." The full-length sitting figure, now in the National Portrait Gallery, was certainly painted from memory.

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[1] Mr. John Hunter, who, equally with the author of these Recollections, is no longer among the living, was an ardent admirer of Keats, and, as long ago as 1843, issued a little privately printed volume (*Miscellanies by N. R.*) wherein there was a sonnet which I am fain to quote here :—

KEATS.

"The Muses' son of promise," art thou gone!
Oh! if the world of Grecian dreamers be
In truth embosom'd in eternity,
There will thy spirit find a fitting throne!
Thine was the beauty of the bud half-blown—
The first pure trembling hues of poesy :—
Sweet, tender, graceful, delicate, wild and free,
At morn thou bloomd'st—the wind nipp'd,—thou art gone!
Yet, Bard of youth, thou hast not lived in vain.
The young, the pure in soul, from age to age,
Shall revel in the music of thy page;
And love his memory who pour'd the strain.
*Oh! not "in water" written is thy name,—
'Tis graven in "red-leaved tables of the heart" by Fame!

* A few days before his death, Mr. Keats, in answer to one of his friends, who spoke of erecting a monument to his memory said :— "If you do, let the inscription be,—Here lyes one 'whose name was writ in water.'" [AUTHOR'S NOTE.]

There is one of his attitudes during familiar conversation which at times (with the whole earnest manner and sweet expression of the man) ever presents itself to me as though I had seen him only last week. How gracious is the boon that the benedictions and the blessings in our life-careers last longer, and recur with stronger influences, than the ill-deeds and the curses! The attitude I speak of was that of cherishing one leg over the knee of the other, smoothing the instep with the palm of his hand. In this action I mostly associate him in an eager parley with Leigh Hunt in his little Vale of Health cottage. This position, if I mistake not, is in the last portrait of him at Craig Crook; if not, it is a reminiscent one, painted after his death. His stature could have been very little more than five feet; but he was, withal, compactly made and well-proportioned; and before the hereditary disorder which carried him off began to show itself, he was active, athletic, and enduringly strong—as the fight with the butcher gave full attestation.

His perfect friend, Joseph Severn, writes of him: "Here in Rome, as I write, I look back through forty years of worldly changes, and behold Keats's dear image again in memory. It seems as if he should be living with me now, inasmuch as I never could understand his strange and contradictory death, his falling away so suddenly from health and strength.[1] He had a fine compactness of person, which we regard as the promise of longevity, and no mind was ever more exultant in youthful feeling."

The critical world—by which term I mean the censorious portion of it, for many have no other idea of criticism than that of censure and objection—the critical world have so gloated over the feebler, or, if they will, the defective side of Keats's genius, and his friends have so amply justified him, that I feel inclined to add no more to the category of opinions than to say that the only fault in his poetry I could discover was a redundancy of imagery—that exuberance, by the way, being a quality of the greatest promise seeing that it is the constant accompaniment of a young and teeming genius. But his steady friend, Leigh Hunt, has rendered the amplest and truest record of his mental accomplishment in the preface to his "Foliage," quoted at page 150 of the first volume of the "Life of Keats;" [1] and his biographer has so zealously, and, I would say, so amiably, summed up his character and intellectual qualities, that I can add no more than my assent.

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[1] In 1878, when the Letters to Fanny Brawne were published, Mr. Severn wrote to me that he then understood "*for the first time* the sufferings and death of" Keats, who "did not confide" to his friend, it seems, "this serious passion," being in fact absolutely unable to speak or write of Miss Brawne at last.

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[1] This passage might seem to imply that the remarks in question in the preface to *Foliage* were positively written as relating to Keats; but this is not the case, although Lord Houghton appears to think that Hunt had in his mind Keats as well as Shakespeare when he wrote those remarks. The whole passage in the *Life, Letters* &c. is as follows:—"In the Preface to 'Foliage' there is, amongst other ingenious criticisms, a passage on Shakespeare's scholarship, which seems to me to have more than an accidental bearing on the kind of classical knowledge which Keats really possessed. 'Though not a scholar,' writes Mr. Hunt, 'he needed nothing more than the description given by scholars, good or indifferent, in order to pierce back at once into all the recesses of the original country. They told him where they had been, and he was there in an instant, though not in the track of their footing;—*Battendo l'ali verso l'aurea fronde.* The truth is, he felt the Grecian mythology not as a set of school-boy common-places which it was thought wrong to give up, but as something which it requires more than mere scholarship to understand—as the elevation of the external world and of accomplished humanity to the highest pitch of the graceful, and as embodied essences of all the grand and lovely qualities of nature. His description of Proserpine and her flowers, in the "Winter's Tale," of the characteristic beauties of some of the Gods in "Hamlet," and that single couplet in the "Tempest,"

With regard to Keats's political opinions I have little doubt that his whole civil creed was comprised in the master principle of "universal liberty"—viz.: "Equal and stern justice to all, from the duke to the dustman."

There are constant indications through the memoirs and in the letters of Keats of his profound reverence for Shakespeare. His own intensity of thought and expression visibly strengthened with the study of his idol; and he knew but little of him till he had himself become an author. A marginal note by him in a folio copy of the plays is an example of the complete absorption his mind had undergone during the process of his matriculation; and, through life, however long with any of us, we are all in progress of matriculation, as we study the "myriad-minded's" system of philosophy. The note that Keats made was this:—"The genius of Shakespeare was an *innate universality;* wherefore he laid the achievements of human intellect prostrate beneath his indolent and kingly gaze; *he could do easily men's*

"Ye nymphs called Naiads of the wandering brooks,
With your sedged crowns and *ever harmless looks,*"

are in the deepest taste of antiquity, and show that all great poets look at themselves and the fine world about them in the same clear and ever-living fountains.' Every word of this might have applied to Keats, who, at this time, himself seems to have been studying Shakespeare with the greatest diligence." It may not be irrelevant to mention that, in the page of the *Foliage* volume where this passage begins, occurs the expression *leafy luxuries* (not as a quotation) from the sonnet in which Keats had dedicated his first volume of Poems to Hunt the year before *Foliage* was published. See Volume I, page 5.

utmost. His plan of tasks to come was not of this world. If what he proposed to do hereafter would not in the idea answer the aim, how tremendous must have been his conception of ultimates!" I question whether any one of the recognized high priests of the temple has uttered a loftier homily in honour of the world's intellectual homage and renown.

A passage in one of Keats's letters to me evidences that he had a "firm belief in the immortality of the soul," and, as he adds, "so had Tom," whose eyes he had just closed. I once heard him launch into a rhapsody on the genius of Moses, who he said deserved the benediction of the whole world, were it only for his institution of the "Sabbath." But Keats was no "Sabbatarian" in the modern conventional acceptation of the term. "Every day," he once said, was "Sabbath" to him, as it is to every grateful mind, for blessings momentarily bestowed upon us. This recalls Wordsworth's lines, where he tells us that Nature,

"Still constant in her worship, still
Conforming to th' eternal will,
Whether men sow or reap the fields,
Divine admonishments she yields,
That not by hand alone we live,
Or what a hand of flesh can give;
That every day should have some part
Free for a Sabbath of the heart:
So shall the seventh be truly blest,
From morn to eve with hallow'd rest."

Sunday was indeed Keats's "day of rest," and I may add, too, of untainted mirth and gladness; as I believe, too, of unprofessing, unostentatious gratitude. His whole course of life, to its very last act, was one routine of unselfishness and of consideration for others' feelings. The approaches of death having come on, he said to his untiring nurse-friend:—"Severn—I—lift me up. I am dying. *I shall die easy; don't be frightened;* be firm, and thank God it has come."

"Now burning through the inmost veil of Heaven
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons[1] from the abode where the Eternal are."

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[1] In Clarke's Recollections this word is printed as *Beams.*

VI.

NOTE ON THE SCHOOL-HOUSE OF KEATS AT ENFIELD

BY CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE.

ON leaving England in 1856 for a continental residence, my wife and I went to take leave of dear old Enfield, which, besides being most happily associated in our minds, is the very *beau-ideal* of an English village. Green, picturesque, brightened by the winding New River, it is one of the most beautiful of miniature towns, and may vie with Shaksperian Stratford-on-Avon itself, or artistic Dulwich, for charm of natural attraction. Here the married pair in question spent their first days of

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I think students and lovers of Keats will be glad to see added to Charles Cowden Clarke's other and more direct memories of the poet this note on the old School-house where Keats got his education. The note was published in *The St. James's Holiday Annual* for 1875, with the following editorial memorandum appended to it:—

"Since this article was written, the building referred to 'has been cleared away,' says the *History of Enfield* (W. H. Meyers), 'to make room for the new station of the Great Eastern Railway, and the central part of the façade has been purchased by the directors of the South Kensington Museum, where it has been erected as a screen in the structural division. It was taken down brick by brick with the greatest care, all being numbered and packed in boxes of sawdust for carriage. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the workmanship, the bricks having been ground down to a perfect face and joined with beeswax and resin, no mortar or lime being used.

wedded seclusion; and here, in 1787, was the husband born. He first drew breath in the comfortable mansion of which a representation is given by our artist; and it was with a feeling of great relief that he found the old house had been preserved when its site was bought for a railway station, the Company having had the good taste to respect so graceful a specimen of bygone English domestic architecture.

It had, by tradition, been originally built by a retired West India merchant; and one brick of the edifice bore the figures "1717."

The structure was of rich red brick, moulded into designs decorating the front with garlands of flowers and pomegranates, together with heads of cherubim, over two niches in the centre of the building.

On leaving Northampton to establish a school near London, Mr. John Clarke, my father, settled in this handsome red brick mansion at Enfield; and Charles Lamb's erudite Greek, and eccentric friend, George Dyer, who had been John Clarke's brother-usher in the provincial earlier time, often afterward came to see him

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In this manner the whole front being built in a solid block, the circular headed niches with their carved cherubs being afterwards cut out with the chisel. . . . The date of the building is about the end of Charles the Second's reign.'—Mr. Cowden Clarke thinks it was not quite so early. We believe that Captain Marryat and the 'Calculating Boy'—George Bidder—were educated in the old house. Marryat ran away from school, and being pursued by an usher, and overtaken, he walked into a pond, and coolly told the master to catch him if he could, or something to that effect."

Mrs. Charles Cowden Clarke assures me that, as a representation of the old school-house of her father-in-law, a wood-cut published in *The Illustrated London News* for the 3rd of March 1849 ("The Enfield Railway Station") is far preferable to the cut which appeared in *The St. James's Holiday Annual* as a frontispiece to these remarks of Clarke's.

when settled here. On one of these occasional visits, I remember our family party being entertained with the account George Dyer gave of his having spent some time among a wandering tribe of gypsies, his object being to acquire some knowledge of the original dialect and social customs of those erratic and wild-wayed people; and thinking the best means of effecting his wish would be to join them for a period in their daily haunts and habits.

The house, airy, roomy, and substantial, with a good allowance of appertaining land, was especially fitted for a school. "The eight-bedded room," "the six-bedded room," as they were called, give some idea of the dimensions of the apartments. The school-room, which occupied the site where formerly had been the coach-house and stabling, was forty feet long; and the playground was a spacious courtyard between the school-room and the house. In this playground there flourished a goodly baking-pear tree; and it was made a point of honour with "the boys" that if they forbore from touching the fruit until fit for gathering, they should have it in due time for supper regales, properly baked or stewed.

From the playground stretched a garden, one hundred yards in length, where in one corner were some small plots set aside for certain boys fond of having a little garden of their own, that they might cultivate according to their individual will and pleasure; and farther on was a sweep of greensward, beyond the centre of which was a pond, sometimes dignified as "The Lake" and concerning which there existed a legend that the clay originally dug therefrom furnished the material of the red bricks whereof the house was built. Round this pond sloped strawberry-beds, the privilege of watering which was awarded to "assiduous boys" on summer evenings, with the due understanding that they would have their just share of the juicy red berries when fully ripe. At the far end of the pond—and in those boyish days it seemed indeed "far," nothing appearing more wonderfully diminished than the distances and spaciousnesses of all these objects when I beheld them in subsequent years, on return to them in manhood—at the far end of the pond, beneath the iron railings which divided our premises from the meadows beyond, whence the song of the nightingales in May would reach us in the stillness of night, there stood a rustic arbour, where John Keats and I used to sit and read Spenser's "Faery Queene" together, when he had left school, and used to come over from Edmonton, where he was apprenticed to Thomas Hammond the surgeon. On the other side of the house lay a small enclosure which we called "the drying-ground," and where was a magnificent old morella cherry-tree against a wall well exposed to the sun. Beyond this, a gate led into a small field, or paddock, of two acres,—the pasture-ground of two cows that supplied the establishment with fresh and abundant milk.

It was a domain of almost boundless extent and magnificence to the imagination of a schoolboy; and it really did possess solid excellences. The handsomeness of the house itself has attracted the admiration of staider eyes than those of ladhood; and I remember when I was a little fellow, having been put during a childish illness to sleep in a small room apart from the other boys in the centre of the house, I thought it a good opportunity to steal out on to the lead flat over the entrance-door, that I might properly and closely inspect the pomegranate garlands and cherubim I had so often heard extolled by grown people, my elders, judges who ought to know what beautiful architecture really was.

Several men of ability, well-informed, practical, prosperous men of business, issued from that Enfield school-house; and three men of eminence—John Keats, the young poet; Edward Holmes, the enthusiastic and accomplished musician; and Edward Cowper, the scientific engineer and inventor, were wholly educated there.

All of them retained affectionate recollection of that pleasant spot in after-life; and now, as my thoughts revert to it, and picture it vividly to memory in its English beauty of village snugness, comfort, and greenness, while surrounded by Italian splendour of blue sky, blue sea, and sunny land-scenery, I am glad to have been asked to note my remembrance of the old house at Enfield.

VILLA NOVELLO, GENOA.

VII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF KEATS

BY BENJAMIN ROBERT HAYDON,

extracted from his Autobiography, Journals, Çorrespondence, and Table-Talk.

ABOUT this time[1] I met John Keats at Leigh Hunt's, and was amazingly interested by his prematurity of intellectual and poetical power.

I read one or two of his sonnets and formed a very high idea of his genius. After a short time I liked him so much that a general invitation on my part followed, and we became extremely intimate. He visited my painting-room at all times and at all times was welcome.

He was below the middle size, with a low forehead, and an eye that had an inward look, perfectly divine, like a Delphian priestess who saw visions. The greatest calamity for Keats was his being brought before the

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The first part of these Recollections is given from the Autobiography as published by the late Mr. Tom Taylor in his *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter* (second edition, 1853). The changes made in that part of the text (pages 346-58) are from the manuscript. The rest of the Recollections are from Mr. Frederic Wordsworth Haydon's book published in 1876 under the title of *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk.* There is not very much about Keats in the account of the celebrated dinner party—the "immortal dinner," as Haydon calls it; but I retain it in full, as helping us to realize the kind of scenes in which Keats took part.

[1] Apparently the meeting took place in October or November 1816. See Volume III of this edition of Keats, pages 43 and 44.

world by a set who had so much the habit of puffing each other that every one connected with it suffered in public estimation. Hence every one was inclined to disbelieve his genius. After the first criticism in the Quarterly somebody from Dartmouth sent him 25*l.*[1] I told Mrs. Hoppner this, and begged her to go to Gifford and endeavour to prevent his assault on Endymion. She told me she found him writing with his green shade before his eyes, totally insensible to all reproach or entreaty. "How can you, Gifford, dish up in this dreadful manner a youth who has never offended you?" "It has done him good," replied Gifford; "he has had 25*l.* from Devonshire." Mrs. Hoppner was extremely intimate with Gifford, and she told me she had a great mind to snatch the manuscript from the table and throw it in the fire. She left Gifford in a great passion, but without producing the least effect.

One evening (19th November, 1816) after a most eager interchange of thoughts I received from Keats his sonnet beginning, "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning."[2] I thanked him, and he wrote—"Your letter has filled me with a proud pleasure, and shall be kept by me as a stimulus to exertion. I begin to fix my eye on one horizon. The idea of your sending it to Wordsworth puts me out of breath. You know with what reverence I would send my well wishes to him."

As I was walking one day with him in the Kilburn meadows, he said "Haydon, what a pity it is there is not a human dusthole."[3]

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[1] See Keats's account of this affair at pages 270-1 of Volume III.

[2] See Volume I, page 82, and Volume III, page 44.

[3] Under the head of "Table-Talk" Mr. F. W. Haydon has the following paragraph (Volume II, page 287): "Keats said to me of Leigh Hunt, 'It is a great pity that people, by associating them-

His brother (who died in a consumption, and to whom Keats alludes in the lines in his beautiful "Ode to the Nightingale," "and youth grows pale and spectre thin, and dies,") told me some interesting things about his infancy, which they got from a servant whom they were obliged to find out to ascertain his brother's age before he could come to his property.

He was when an infant a most violent and ungovernable child. At five years of age or thereabouts, he once got hold of a naked sword and shutting the door swore nobody should go out. His mother wanted to do so, but he threatened her so furiously she began to cry, and was obliged to wait till somebody through the window saw her position and came to her rescue.

An old lady (Mrs. Grafty, of Craven Street, Finsbury) told his brother George,—when in reply to her question, "what John was doing," he told her he had determined to become a poet—that this was very odd, because when he could just speak, instead of answering questions put to him he would always make a rhyme to the last word people said, and then laugh. As he grew up he was apprenticed to an apothecary,[1] in which position he led a wretched life, translated Ovid without having ever been properly taught Latin, and read Shakspeare, Spenser and Chaucer. He used sometimes to say to his brother he feared he should never be a poet, and if he was not he would destroy himself. He used to suffer such agonies at this apprehension, that his brother said

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selves with a few things, spoil them. Hunt has damned Hampstead, masks, sonnets, and Italian tales.' Another time, when walking in West-end fields, he said, 'Haydon, what a pity it is there is not a Human Dusthole!'"

[1] Mr. Thomas Hammond has been described as "a surgeon of some eminence."

they really feared he would execute his threat. At last his master, weary of his disgust, gave him up his time. During his mother's last illness his devoted attachment interested all. He sat up whole nights with her in a great chair, would suffer nobody to give her medicine, or even cook her food, but himself, and read novels to her in her intervals of ease.

Keats was the only man I ever met with who seemed and looked conscious of a high calling, except Wordsworth.[1] Byron and Shelley were always sophisticating about their verses: Keats sophisticated about nothing. He had made up his mind to do great things, and when he found that by his connexion with the Examiner clique he had brought upon himself an overwhelming outcry of unjust aversion he shrunk up into himself; his diseased tendencies showed themselves, and he died a victim to mistakes on all hands, alike on the part of enemies and friends. Where I first met Horace Smith I have no recollection, but a more delightful fellow, or a kinder and sounder heart no man's breast ever sheltered. During this month[2] I was invited to meet Shelley, and as I had heard a great deal about him I readily assented to do so; I came a little after the time, and seated myself in the place kept for me at table, right opposite Shelley himself, as I was told after, for I did not know what hectic, spare, weakly yet intellectual looking creature it was, carving a bit of brocoli or cabbage on his plate as if it had been the substantial wing of a chicken. Hunt and his wife, her sister, old Hill, John Keats, myself and Horace Smith made up the party.

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[1] The following foot-note is from page 108, Volume I, of *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk*:—"In his journal for March, 1817, I find the following affectionate reference to Keats: 'Keats has published his first poems, and great things indeed they promise . . . . Keats is a man after my own heart. He sympathises with me, and comprehends me. We saw through each other at once, and I hope are friends for ever. I only know that, if I sell my picture, Keats shall never want till another is done, that he may have leisure for his effusions; in short, he shall never want all his life while I live.'"

[2] January 1817, Mr. Frank Scott Haydon tells me.

In a few minutes Shelley, in the most feminine and gentlest voice, said "As to that detestable Religion the Christian Religion" &c. &c. Let the Reader fancy that these were the very first words I heard an intellectual and charitable human being utter in my Life! I looked astounded, but casting a glance round the table easily saw by Hunt's expression of extasy and the Women's simper that I was to be sat at that [evening] *armis et vi.* No reply was made to this sally, we all eat our dinner and when the dessert came and the servant was gone to it we went like Devils. All present were deists but myself, and I felt exactly like a stag at bay and resolved to gore without mercy. Shelley said the Mosaic and Christian dispensations were inconsistent. I swore they were not, and that the Ten Commandments had been the foundation of all the codes of law on the earth. Shelley denied it, Hunt backed him, I affirmed, neither one of us using one atom of logic. Shelley said Shakspeare could not have been a Christian because he made the Gaoler say in Cymbeline—

> "For look you, sir, you know not the way you should go.
>
> *Posthumus.* Yes indeed I do, fellow.
>
> *Gaol.* Your death has eyes in his head then, and I have never seen him so pictured: you must either be directed by some who take upon themselves to know, or take upon yourself that I am sure you do not know, or jump the after inquiry on your own peril, and how you shall speed on your journey's end, I think you will never return to tell me.
>
> *Post.* I tell ye, fellow, there are none want eyes to direct them, the way I am going, but such as wink, and will not use them.

Gaol. What an infinite mock is this, that a man should have the best use of his eyes to see the way of blindness."

I replied, that proved nothing; you might as well argue Shakspeare was in favour of murder because, [when] he makes a murderer, he is ready to murder, as to infer he did not believe in another world or Christianity, because he has put sophistry in the mouth of a gaoler.

I said his own will might be inferred to be his own belief, and there he says, "In Jesus Christ hoping and assuredly believing, I, W. Shakespeare, &c." Hunt and Shelley said that was a mere matter of form. I said theirs was mere matter of inference, and if quotation was argument—I would give two passages to one in my favour. They sneered and I at once quoted

> "Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
> That in the course of justice none of us
> Should see salvation."

And again:—

> "Alas! alas!
> Why all the souls that were were forfeit once,
> And he that might th' advantage best have took,
> Found out the remedy."

Neither Smith, Keats or Hill said a word; the Women seemed delighted to be palliated in the infidelity they had come to; and Shelley, Hunt, and S. kept at it—till, finding I was a match for all their arguments, they became personal, and so did I. We said nasty things to each other, and when I retired to the other room for a moment I overheard them say, "Haydon is fierce." "Yes," said Hunt; "the question always irritates him." As his Wife and Sister were dressing to go, Hunt said to me with a look of nervous fear, "Are these creatures to be d—ned, Haydon?" Good Heaven! what a morbid view of Christianity.

* * * * *

Some time before this a coolness had grown up between Leigh Hunt and myself.[1] Accidentally meeting him at a friend's, he was so exceedingly delightful I could not resist the dog. We forgot our quarrels and walked away together, quoting, and joking and laughing as if nothing had happened.

The assaults on Hunt in Blackwood at this time under the signature of Z. were incessant. Who Z. was nobody knew; but I myself strongly suspect him to have been Terry the actor. Leigh Hunt had exasperated Terry by neglecting to notice his theatrical efforts. Terry was a friend of Sir Walter's, shared keenly his political hatreds, and was also most intimate with the Blackwood party, which had begun a course of attacks on all who showed the least liberalism of thinking or who were praised by or known to the Examiner. Hunt had addressed a sonnet to me. This was enough; we were taken to be of the same clique of rebels, rascals and reformers, who were supposed to support that production of so much power and talent. On Keats the effect was melancholy. He became morbid and silent, would call and sit whilst I was painting for hours without speaking a word. As I was on a great work it did not affect me, but it had its affect on my connexions who were all High Tory and indirectly backed the Academy, which I was trying through the Annals (read principally in high life) to bring into contempt and level to the ground in public opinion.

* * * * *

On December 28th [1817] the immortal dinner came off in my painting-room, with Jerusalem towering up behind us as a background. Wordsworth was in fine cue, and we had a glorious set-to,—on Homer, Shakespeare, Milton and Virgil. Lamb got exceedingly merry and exquisitely witty; and his fun in the midst of Wordsworth's solemn intonations of oratory was like the sarcasm and wit of the fool in the interval of Lear's passion. He made a speech and voted me absent, and made them drink my health. "Now," said Lamb, "you old lake poet, you rascally poet, why do you call Voltaire dull?" We all defended Wordsworth, and affirmed there was a state of mind when Voltaire would be dull. "Well," said Lamb, "here's Voltaire—the Messiah of the French nation, and a very proper one too."[1]

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[1] The attacks on Hunt in Blackwood extend from October 1817 to August 1818. It is not clear how soon the coolness between Hunt and Haydon took place; but Mr. Taylor gives this passage under 1817. "Z." is said to have been Lockhart.

He then, in a strain of humour beyond description, abused me for putting Newton's head into my picture,—"a fellow," said he, "who believed nothing unless it was as clear as the three sides of a triangle." And then he and Keats agreed he had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic colours. It was impossible to resist him, and we all drank "Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics." It was delightful to see the good-humour of Wordsworth in giving in to all our frolics without affectation and laughing as heartily as the best of us.

By this time other friends joined, amongst them poor Ritchie who was going to penetrate by Fezzan to Timbuctoo. I introduced him to all as "a gentleman going to Africa." Lamb seemed to take no notice; but all of a sudden he roared out, "Which is the gentleman we are going to lose?" We then drank the victim's health, in which Ritchie joined.

In the morning of this delightful day, a gentleman, a perfect stranger, had called on me. He said he knew my friends, had an enthusiasm for Wordsworth and begged I would procure him the happiness of an introduction. He told me he was a comptroller of stamps, and often had correspondence with the poet. I thought it a liberty; but still, as he seemed a gentleman, I told him he might come.

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[1] Hunt reports this mot differently: see page 281 of this volume.

When we retired to tea we found the comptroller. In introducing him to Wordsworth I forgot to say who he was. After a little time the comptroller looked down, looked up and said to Wordsworth, "Don't you think, sir, Milton was a great genius?" Keats looked at me, Wordsworth looked at the comptroller. Lamb who was dozing by the fire turned round and said, "Pray, sir, did you say Milton was a great genius?" "No, sir; I asked Mr. Wordsworth if he were not." "Oh," said Lamb, "then you are a silly fellow." "Charles! my dear Charles!" said Wordsworth; but Lamb, perfectly innocent of the confusion he had created, was off again by the fire.

After an awful pause the comptroller said, "Don't you think Newton a great genius?" I could not stand it any longer. Keats put his head into my books. Ritchie squeezed in a laugh. Wordsworth seemed asking himself, "Who is this?" Lamb got up, and taking a candle, said, "Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological development?" He then turned his back on the poor man, and at every question of the comptroller he chaunted—

> "Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John
> Went to bed with his breeches on."

The man in office, finding Wordsworth did not know who he was, said in a spasmodic and half-chuckling anticipation of assured victory, "I have had the honour of some correspondence with you, Mr. Wordsworth." "With me, sir?" said Wordsworth, "not that I remember." "Don't you, sir? I am a comptroller of stamps." There was a dead silence;—the comptroller evidently thinking that was enough. While we were waiting for Wordsworth's reply, Lamb sung out

"Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle."

"My dear Charles!" said Wordsworth,—

"Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John,"

chaunted Lamb, and then rising, exclaimed, "Do let me have another look at that gentleman's organs." Keats and I hurried Lamb into the painting-room, shut the door and gave way to inextinguishable laughter. Monkhouse followed and tried to get Lamb away. We went back but the comptroller was irreconcilable. We soothed and smiled and asked him to supper. He stayed though his dignity was sorely affected. However, being a good-natured man, we parted all in good-humour, and no ill effects followed.

All the while, until Monkhouse succeeded, we could hear Lamb struggling in the painting-room and calling at intervals, "Who is that fellow? Allow me to see his organs once more."

It was indeed an immortal evening. Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats' eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour, so speeded the stream of conversation, that in my life I never passed a more delightful time. All our fun was within bounds. Not a word passed that an apostle might not have listened to. It was a night worthy of the Elizabethan age, and my solemn Jerusalem flashing up by the flame of the fire, with Christ hanging over us like a vision, all made up a picture which will long glow upon—

> "that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude."

Keats made Ritchie promise he would carry his Endymion to the great desert of Sahara and fling it in the midst.

Poor Ritchie went to Africa, and died, as Lamb foresaw, in 1819. Keats died in 1821, at Rome. C. Lamb is gone, joking to the last. Monkhouse is dead, and Wordsworth and I are the only two now living (1841) of that glorious party.

* * * * *

[29 March 1821.] Keats too is gone! He died at Rome, the 23rd February, aged twenty-five. A genius more purely poetical never existed!

In fireside conversation he was weak and inconsistent, but he was in his glory in the fields. The humming of a bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the sun, seemed to make his nature tremble; then his eyes flashed, his cheek glowed, his mouth quivered. He was the most unselfish of human creatures: unadapted to this world, he cared not for himself, and put himself to any inconvenience for the sake of his friends. He was haughty, and had a fierce hatred of rank; but he had a kind gentle heart, and would have shared his fortune with any man who wanted it. His classical knowledge was inconsiderable, but he could feel the beauties of the classical writers. He had an exquisite sense of humour, and too refined a notion of female purity to bear the little sweet arts of love with patience. He had no decision of character, and having no object upon which to direct his great powers, was at the mercy of every pretty theory Hunt's ingenuity might start.

One day he was full of an epic poem; the next day epic poems were splendid impositions on the world. Never for two days did he know his own intentions.

He began life full of hopes, fiery, impetuous and ungovernable, expecting the world to fall at once beneath his powers. Poor fellow! his genius had no sooner begun to bud, than hatred and malice spat their poison on its leaves, and sensitive and young it shrivelled beneath their effusions. Unable to bear the sneers of ignorance or the attacks of envy, not having strength of mind enough to buckle himself together like a porcupine, and present nothing but his prickles to his enemies, he began to despond, and flew to dissipation as a relief, which after a temporary elevation of spirits plunged him into deeper despondency than ever. For six weeks he was scarcely sober, and—to show what a man does to gratify his appetites, when once they get the better of him—once covered his tongue and throat as far as he could reach with Cayenne pepper, in order to appreciate the "delicious coldness of claret in all its glory,"—his own expression.[1]

The death of his brother wounded him deeply, and it appeared to me that he began to droop from that hour. I was much attached to Keats, and he had a fellow-feeling for me. I was angry because he would not bend his great powers to some definite object, and always told him so. Latterly he grew irritated because I would shake my head at his irregularities, and tell him that he would destroy himself.

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[1] Charles Cowden Clarke made a very sharp rejoinder to this account when he published his Recollections in *The Gentleman's Magazine*; but the passage was omitted in reprinting those Recollections; and I therefore omit it now. Suffice it to say that Clarke does not give much credence to the pepper story, and discredits entirely the general statement as to dissipation.

The last time I ever saw him was at Hampstead, lying in a white bed with a book, hectic and on his back, irritable at his weakness and wounded at the way he had been used. He seemed to be going out of life with a contempt for this world and no hopes of the other. I told him to be calm, but he muttered that if he did not soon get better he would destroy himself. I tried to reason against such violence, but it was no use; he grew angry, and I went away deeply affected.

Poor dear Keats! Had nature but given you firmness as well as fineness of nerve, you would have been glorious in your maturity as great in your promise. May your kind and gentle spirit be now mingling with those of Shakespeare and Milton, before whose minds you have so often bowed! May you be considered worthy of admission to share their musings in heaven as you were fit to comprehend their imaginations on earth!

Dear Keats, hail and adieu for some six or seven years, and I shall meet you.

I have enjoyed Shakespeare more with Keats than with any other human creature.

* * * * *

Keats[1] was a victim to personal abuse and want of nerve to bear it. Ought he to have sunk in that way because a few quizzers told him that he was an apothecary's apprentice? A genius more purely poetical never existed! In conversation he was nothing, or if anything, weak and inconsistent; he had an exquisite sense of humour, but it was in the fields Keats was in his glory. . . . . His ruin was owing to his want of decision of character and power of will, without which genius is a curse. He could not bring his mind to bear on one object, and was at the mercy of every pretty theory Leigh Hunt's ingenuity would suggest. . . . . He had a tending to religion when first I knew him, but Leigh Hunt soon forced it from his mind. Never shall I forget Keats once rising from his chair and approaching my last picture ("Entry into Jerusalem"), he went before the portrait of Voltaire, placed his hand on his heart and bowing low

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[1] In addition to the foregoing account published by Mr. Taylor, there is an account dated the 21st of April 1821 given by Mr. F. W. Haydon from a letter of his father's to Miss Mitford. It seems desirable to preserve both here, notwithstanding repetitions.

> ". . . . In reverence done, as to the power
> That dwelt within, whose presence had infused
> Into the plant sciential sap, derived
> From nectar, drink of gods,"

as Milton says of Eve after she had eaten the apple. "That's the being to whom I bend," said he, alluding to the bending of the other figures in the picture, and contrasting Voltaire with our Saviour, and his own adoration to that of the crowd. Leigh Hunt was the great unhinger of his best dispositions. Latterly, Keats saw Leigh Hunt's weakness. I distrusted his leader, but Keats would not cease to visit him because he thought Hunt illused. This showed Keats's goodness of heart.[1]

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[1] The following paragraph is given by Mr. F. W. Haydon under the head of "Table-Talk" (Volume II, page 258):

"I remember Keats repeating to me that exquisite ode to Pan, just after he had conceived it, in a low, half-chanting, trembling tone. What a true genius he was! Poor fellow! 'I know the miserable mistake,' said he, 'I have ignorantly made in devoting myself to Leigh Hunt; but he is not selfish, and I'll not shrink now he is in trouble.' These were his very words. I was to have made

He began life full of hope, and his brother told me that he recounted with pride and delight the opinion we had expressed of his powers the first morning he had breakfasted with me. Fiery, impetuous, ungovernable, and undecided, he expected the world to bow at once to his talents as his friends had done, and he had not patience to bear the natural irritation of envy at the undoubted proof he gave of strength. Goaded by ridicule he distrusted himself, and flew to dissipation. For six weeks he was hardly ever sober, and to show you what a man of genius does when his passions are roused, he told me that he once covered his tongue and throat, as far as he could reach, with cayénne pepper, in order to enjoy the "delicious coolness of claret in all its glory." This was his own expression.[1]

The death of his brother wounded him deeply, and it appeared to me from that hour he began to droop. He wrote his exquisite "Ode to the Nightingale" at this time, and as we were one evening walking in the Kilburn meadows he repeated it to me, before he put it to paper, in a low, tremulous under-tone which affected me extremely. He had great enthusiasm for me and so had I for him, but he grew angry latterly because I shook my head at his proceedings. I told him, I begged of him to bend his genius to some definite object. I remonstrated on his absurd dissipation, but to no purpose. The last time I saw him was at Hampstead, lying on his back in

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a drawing of Keats, and my neglect really gave him a pang, as it now does me."

It might seem from this that the idea of printing *Endymion* as a quarto with a frontispiece consisting of Keats's portrait by Haydon (see Volume III, page 107) was abandoned in consequence of Haydon's failure to fulfil his offer.

[1] See note at page 357.

a white bed, helpless, irritable, and hectic. He had a book, and enraged at his own feebleness, seemed as if he were going out of the world with a contempt for this, and no hopes of a better. He muttered as I stood by him that if he did not recover he would "cut his throat." I tried to calm him, but to no purpose. I left him in great depression of spirit to see him in such a state. Poor dear Keats!

* * * * *

When[1] Keats was living, I could not get Hazlitt to admit Keats had common talents! Death seems to cut off all apprehensions that our self-love will be wounded by acknowledging genius. But let us see, and sift the motives of this sudden change. "Blackwood's" people Hazlitt would murder, morally or physically, no matter which, but to murder them he wishes. To suppose Keats's death *entirely* brought on by "Blackwood's" attacks is too valuable and mortal a blow to be given up. With the wary cunning of a thoroughbred modern review writer, he dwells on this touching subject, so likely to be echoed by all who have suffered by "Blackwood's" vindictive animosities. *Now*, Keats is an immortal; before, he was a pretender! *Now*, his sensitive mind withered under their "murderous criticism," when, had Keats been a little more prominent, Hazlitt, as soon as any man, would have given him the first stab! He thus revenges his own mortification by pushing forward the shattered ghost of poor fated Keats.

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[1] This passage from a letter to Miss Mitford written in September 1823 is given by Mr. F. W. Haydon with the explanatory note—"In his review of Shelley's Works, Hazlitt had spoken of Keats, Shelley, and Byron as 'a band of immortals.' This tickled my father, to whom Hazlitt had persistently denied Keats's claims to any talent, much less immortality."

VIII.

EXTRACTS FROM THE LETTERS OF

JOSEPH SEVERN

To CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN,—

MAY 1821 TO AUGUST 1838.

Rome, May 2nd, 1821.

My dear Brown

I have great pleasure in introducing to you this gentleman—Mr. William Ewing—for his kind services to our poor Keats and myself. Altho' we came here strangers to him, he gave us all the attention of an old friend, and that of the most valuable kind. You will remember my mention of a gentleman who sought all over Rome for an Ice Jelly when it was told me none could be got. It was this gentleman who procured one, and who rendered me many other like services on the like dreadfull occasions. I had no other soul to help me. Except Dr. Clark and myself, he saw more of Keats than any one—he will inform you on many points, as yet, too dreadfull for me to write. I am still compleatly unnerved when I look upon poor Keats's death; it still hangs upon me like a horrible dream. You will find this

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These extracts were printed in *The Athenæum* for the 23rd and 30th of August 1879. I have only inserted a few lines from one of the originals and placed the name in a blank for which there is not now any occasion.

gentleman to possess extraordinary skill as a Sculptor—his works in Ivory are to me the most beautiful things of the kind I ever saw.

* * * * *

Rome, July 17th, 1821.

* * * You see on the approach of the hot and dangerous weather I shall be obliged to go away, and that without placing a Stone on poor Keats's grave. All his papers I have sent to you, packed for safety in a Box of divers things belonging to my old friend and Master Mr. Bond. I chose this from many as the safest way—they will arrive in London about August or September.

Mr. Taylor has written me of his intention to write some remembrances of our Keats. This is a kind thought of his, and I reverence this good man—nothing can be more interesting than to have the beautiful character of Keats described and appreciated. If it can be made known to the English, his memory will be cherished by them, not more for his Genius than for his English nature. I begin to think of him without pain—all the harsh horror of his death is fast subsiding from my mind. Sometimes a delightful glance of his life about the time when I first knew him will take possession of me and keep me speculating on and on to some passage in the "Endymion." (I am fortunate to have a copy of this—it is Dr. Clark's—the last also.) Here I find many admirers—aye, real ones—of his Poetry. This is a very great pleasure to me. I have many most agreeable conversations about him—but that only with classical scholars. The "Lamia" is the greatest favourite.

I have been most sadly harassed about my picture for the Royal Academy, for this reason,—I have received notice to send it by the 10th of August. Now this is a month sooner than I expected * * * so that I have sent it unfinished without any delay. Now this has been an unfortunate point, more particularly as I am ill, out of spirits, and friendless—most of the kind fellows here have gone to Naples or elsewhere—so that I am left to brood over the loss of poor Keats's company and above [*sic*]—his advice.

You will recollect, my dear Brown, a mention of me (not with the greatest kindness or charity) at Mr. Hilton's house. Keats spoke several times of this with very great pain, from the fear that something of the same spirit might keep back my Pension. He told me it was one of the meanest said things he ever knew, and at the same time made me promise that I would explain to Mr. Taylor the whole affair—that I would write in such a manner as to persuade Mr. Taylor to use his greatest influence in my behalf with Mr. Hilton. He said, "I am sure Hilton will take up your case on my account. Now promise me you will do this. I have been long brooding over it, and think this damned H. will keep you without your Pension—or try to do so—I know he will—so that this cu[r]sed dying of mine will have been to your loss." This was but a short time before his death. I have written to Mr. Taylor about my present concern, but not of the affair past—I have still thought it better not mentioned—not [*sic*] would I say about it now, but it seems hard I must run the risk of my picture's non-arrival in time from the notice sent me by Hilton. Keats foresaw most keenly, and his words come strong upon me. How, my dear Brown, shall I do in this?

* * * * *

Above all things pray answer [*paper torn*] letters. Tell me how the sad finish of poor Keats affected his enemies—tell me about his friends—tell me about Miss B. I have been once or twice almost writing to her. Only think, my dear Brown, I have known nothing from England since poor Keats's death—O yes, one very kind letter from Mr. Taylor, which I answered. Haslam does not write me.

* * * * *

I have likewise got in [hand ?] a small whole-length of my poor Keats; it is from a recollection of him at your house, I think the last time I saw him there—he was reading, the book on his knee.

* * * * *

Rome, Sept. 19th, 1821.

* * * Why, my dear Brown, what sad affair is this ? I know not what to say in it, except this, that you are the only one to write Keats's Memoir—at least to describe his chara[c]ter. I have the greatest respect for the talent and good heart of Mr. Taylor—his exertions for poor Keats when all was hopeless—the publication of his Books, &c., set his [*sic*] down as a most noble friend—[that] he loved Keats is certain, to have made all these sacrifices, but did not feel the delicacy of his mind. I hope and trust you will reconcile this dispute. It seems to me your seeing the Memoir is the only way to compleat it—that Mr. Taylor's and your own idea of Keats's character will be compleat, but certainly not one without the other. I would say consult Richards too—he was inferior to no one in the estimation of Keats. He will give some valuable scraps. Keats's genius and character must make a most beautiful book, as a book alone —not in making a compleat poet, or even comparing him to others, but in describing and tracing the progress of Genius from nature to Art, and then to their union. I can see all this with immense pleasure. I can recollect

him before he had that delicate perception for Art, when he talked and felt only nature—and I can recollect his knowledge of Art to have been greater than any one *I* ever knew. Then his English nature is a subject most grateful. I don't know whether to prefer his heart or his soul—but pardon me; I can only think of him and paint him. You must not ask me for contributions for this work, except it be from my painting. I am not master of words to show what I feel or think. I recollect a point which may be known to you, perhaps. Keats mentioned to me many times in our voyage his desire to write the story of Sabrina, and to have connected it with some points in the English history and character. He would sometimes brood over it with immense enthusiasm, and recite the story from Milton's "Comus" in a manner that I will remember to the end of my days. Do you [know] the sonnet beginning,

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art?

He wrote this down in the ship—it is one of his most beautiful things. I will send it, if you have it not—at present I have lent the book in which he wrote it, or I would send it. Why how singular that none of you can lament out his Epitaph. I agree with you that more should [be] written than the line he desired. This morning my friend and myself visited poor Keats's grave. It is still covered with grass and flowers, and remains quiet and undisturbed. The place where he lies is one of the most romantic I know—but I won't send you my bungling descriptions, but I will send a small picture of it. On our return home I thought of another "ricordo" to him —a Greek seat, with his solitary lyre standing against it, but I will draw it. You see this is a seat vacant, such as the Greeks used in their [*paper torn*]. It would say—

Here is his seat and his Lyre but [*paper torn*] not beneath. Tell me how you like this. I am delighted with it.

* * * * *

Rome, Jan. 1st, 1822.

* * * I have received a copy of the Monody on Keats. I find many beauties in it, but is it not a pity so much beauty should be scattered about, without the balancing of lights and shades, or the oppositions of colours? In this poem there is such a want of repose,—you are continually longing to know what he will be at. It gave me great pleasure as a tribute to poor Keats's memory.

The picture of poor Keats is in a fair way. I have put in your accurate drawing, but I seem to want that beautiful cast of him there is in London. I cannot finish without, and have named it amongst many things to be sent out to me.

* * * * *

The grave stone is advanced, but not up yet. I cannot well recollect the Greek Lyre, so that they wait for the Drawings from London. I liked the Inscription much, and it shall be done exactly.

I have some hair of our poor Keats, and have been waiting for a friend to bring it to London. I have thought of a little conceit, as a present to poor Miss Brawn[e]—to make a Broach in form of my Greek Lyre, and make the strings of poor Keats's hair, but I cannot find any workman to do it.

* * * * *

I shall not send a drawing of poor Keats I intend for you, but reserve it until I have the happiness to meet you.

Rome, 26th Oct., 1822.

* * * I am just about putting up the grave stone to our Keats. This delay has been occasioned by the want of the Drawings of the Greek Lyre. I could not proceed without them—they are accurate outlines I made from the beautiful Lyre in the Museum of London, and they have at last arrived. I am sorry, my dear Brown, that you are not here with me to share this deep-thinking office. I would have been gratified, for I still long to talk with some one Friend about our poor Keats. Yesterday I visited his grave, which is still covered with Flowers and Grass. I was in company with some German Artists and Poets—they seemed much affected with my recital of Keats's fate—and of Shelley's [1] too.

This stone is to have simply the Greek Lyre, with half the strings not tied. On the upper part will be a bit of Oak and Myrtle, and under, his name, the date when he died, and his age. I say it is to have these, but it is only my own idea. To say the truth, I did not like yours—you seem'd to have anticipated so. By [*sic*] tell me if you approve of this of mine, though I fear it will be accomplished before you write. It will be rather an expensive concern, tho' the friends here of mine, mostly Artists, who are delighted with Keats's works, offered to subscribe, but this I won't allow. I shall make it out somehow. Yet I will have it handsome, even for my own credit as an artist, as well as my other feelings. I understand that the Life is advertised. I wrote to Mr. Taylor, but have never received any answer—tell me if you know as to this. I would like to know if I have given offence to Taylor—tell me if you correspond with him * * * I am now occupied on a picture for the Somerset House Exhibition * * * I shall also send Keats's portrait * * *

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[1] Here and elsewhere, throughout, Shelley's name is spelt *Shelly* in Severn's letters.

I have not heard of Shelley's ashes—how shall I do? Tell me on this point, and you shall find me apt * * * I have not shaken hands with one mutual friend of mine and Keats's since I left England. You can't think of this, my dear Brown, at least not feel it * * *

Rome, Dec. 7th, 1822.

* * * I had just given my directions about poor Keats's Grave Stone. Your mention of your still existing wish for the Epitaph as it stood made me all consent. I saw the superiority of it—it is doing so.

I am all anxiety to know about poor Miss Brawn[e]. Pray tell me this, if you have more accounts.

I shall be most ravenous by May to have a sight of you. What must regulate the time is the finishing my "Alexander," after the "Greek Shepherds" now going on. This, with "Falstaff," and I hope Keats's portrait, will be in the Exhibition next Summer in London.

* * * * *

Did you ever have poor Keats's papers? Know you about the Life? Taylor is going to publish, after all. He has never written to me—is this kind?

* * * * *

Poor Shelley's ashes have arrived. When I get out, I will conduct them to the grave, with the respect due to the Friend of Keats. I have not yet heard from Hunt or Lord Murray.

* * * * *

Have you got a spare copy of the "Lamia" or the "Endymion"? I have been cheated out of mine, and I am so vexed to be without. My friend Mr. Gott (the

Sculptor who had a Gold Medal with me) is doing something from "Endymion," and I have a drawing going on from "St. Agnes' Eve." Pray think of us.

Rome, Jan. 21st, 1823.

I have just returned from the Funeral of poor Shelley. Much delay had taken place from the difficulty of placing the remains together. You must know a new Burial Ground has been made, well walled in, to protect us Heretics against the Catholics, who had most wantonly defaced many of the Protestant Tombs. The old Ground they would not wall, because it would spoil the view of the Pyramid of Cajus Cestius, so this new one is given, and the old one protected with a Ditch, and with an order that no more shall be burried [*sic*] there. Now here was the difficulty. Shelley's ashes were not permitted to [be] placed in the Old Ground where his Child lay, so that we were driven to the alternate [*sic*]—of the new place, and of disintering the Bones of the Child and placing them together; but even this was frustrated, after I had got permission to do it, for, on opening the grave, we discovered a Skeleton of 5½ feet. Yet it appeared to be under the Stone, so that some mistake must have been made in placing the Stone. To search further we dare not, for it was in the presence of many *respectful* but wondering Italians—nay, I thought it would have been a doubtful and horrible thing to disturb any more Strangers' Graves in a Foreign Land. So we proceeded very respectfully to deposit poor Shelley's ashes alone. There were present General Cockburn, Sir C. Sykes, Messrs. Kirkupp, Westmacott, Scoles, Freeborn, and the Revs. W. Cook and Burgess. These two gentlemen, with myself, wished it to be done solemnly and decently, so the Box was inclosed in a coffin, and it was done altogether as by the hands of Friends.

My next sad office is to place poor Keats's Grave Stone, which is not yet done. I hope this week it will be finished. I shall put some Evergreens round it—of course it is in the Old Ground.

I was going to make a proposition to you. There is now here, living with me, a young English Sculptor named Gott, of most rare and delicate genius, who from his first coming to Rome (7 months) has been ill with the Fever. He had a Gold Medal with me in the R.A.; and is now sent here (pensioned like myself) by Sir T. Lawrence. On *his* account I am going to ask your advice about a little Monument to Keats, more worthy him than ours, to be placed (if it was thought better) in Hampstead Church. What gave me this Idea was the applications of several gentlemen to subscribe 20 guineas, &c., for this purpose. I have no doubt it might be done. The Subject of a Basso-rilievo was this which I thought. "Our Keats sitting, habited in a simple Greek Costume, —he has half strung his Lyre, when the Fates seize him. One arrests his arm, another cuts the thread, and the third pronounces his Fate." Gott is very pleased with this Idea, and thinks he could make a fine thing of it. Another thing—I know his works would have pleased so much Keats's taste. It will give him spirits, also, since he finds his income too small to support his Wife and 2 Children. Tell me how you take this—think of it charitably. If any further than the plain stone is placed over Shelley, pray let him do it.

* * * * *

Rome, April 9th, 1823.

* * * There is a Mad Chap come here, whose name is Trelawny. I do not know what to make of him, further than his queer, and, I was near saying, shabby, behaviour to me. He comes as the friend of Shelley, great, glowing, and rich in romance. Of course I show'd all my paint-pot politeness to him, to the very brim—assisted him to remove the Ashes of Shelley to a spot where he himself (when this world has done with his body) will lie. He wished me to think, myself, and consult my Friends, about a Monument to Shelley. The situation is beautiful, and one and all thought a little Basso-rilievo would be the best taste. I was telling him the subject I had proposed for Keats, and he was struck with the propriety of it for Shelley, and my Friend Mr. Gott (whom I mentioned to you) was to be the doer of it. I made the Drawing, which cost us some trouble, yet after expressing the greatest liking for it, the pair of Mustachios has shirk'd off from it, without giving us the yes or no—without even the why or wherefore. I am sorry at this most on Mr. Gott's account, but I ought to have seen that this Lord Byron's Jackall was rather weak in all the points that I could judge, though strong enough in Stilettos. We have not had any open rupture, nor shall we, for I have no doubt that this "Cockney Corsair" fancies he has greatly obliged us by all this trouble we have had. But tell me who is this odd fish? They talk of him here as a camelion, who went mad on reading Lord Byron's "Corsair" that he sailed as one—and has since made both ends meet—I told him this—and to my surprise—he laughd and said it was true.—He told me that he knew you.

* * * * *

[Rome] Sept. 27th, 1824.

* * * Mr. Crauford's Solomon-bob-ism really shock'd me. It did not surprise me, because I had always made a right rec[k]oning on his head, tho' not on his heart. I cannot make out how he could have ventured so much in your mathematical presence. "But s'blood it is but a venture," "and no venture no have," and yet the dog and the shadow is rather a stickler, and so I wonder that, having your decent opinion, he could so lose it; but this [is] a touch of the damn'd world that kill'd poor Keats. O how I do despise from my heart and soul all criticism cant. 'Tis the bane of all honesty and pleasure—'tis a species of Suicide, which a man practises on his reason, killing all the freshness of his mind which God has given him for his delight, and leaving a nasty stinking bit, just enough to be stoned and staked. O how I loathe all the walking-stick impertinence of magazine and Newspaper Criticks, for you see they infest honest men and rob them, not only of their reason, but their pleasure too, else Mr. C. would have had as much enjoyment in Keats's Tragedy as Kirkup or myself. No, he must find fault—but I am glad of his wholesale—I hate your "Chandler's shop" in any thing.

* * * * *

Rome, Jan. 17th, 1830.

Your letter found me in all the glorious confusion of removing. I recognized it as from you, and so put it into my pocket to read in the first quiet moment. I am glad I did so, for its contents affected me much, altho' it was agreeable news, for every thing about poor Keats is melancholy. I am content that this reverse in the fate of his works gives you the occasion to pay a true tribute to his memory, such as I have ever long'd should be done, and such as I know you quite able to do.

I feel, that if you can get over my defective writing, and promise me (which I know you will) not to expose it to the public as mine (for I am not a little proud of Keats as my friend) that I can supply you with ample materials, which I will write spontaneously, not only as to facts which I have witnessed, but also as to my own feeling and impression of his beautiful character. I will not expect or oblige you to use any thing I write, but as you see fit, but I shall expect that you destroy these papers when you have used them, as I feel they *must* contain invectives against many persons whose enmity, or even notice, I am little anxious to have.

Respecting the portrait I feel differently, and shall be proud to make my appearance before the public as the unchanged friend of Keats, loving his memory now he is dead, as I did himself and his works when he was alive, and this is an honor that no one shall share with me, not even the engraver, for I will take up the graver once more and fancy myself inspired to give his resemblance to the world, faulty as it may be, yet done with all my heart and soul. I think the miniature will make a good engraving, and have already imagined the style of the thing, and long to be about it. It would be necessary to have the one in colours to engrave from, which can soon be had from England as it is such a trifle,—not that I think yours defective in any respect, but it is a great advantage always to engrave from colours when it [is] possible. I take it one great reason why the Italian engravings are so stoney and lifeless is because they are copied from mere black and white drawings, whereas there exists a singular power in engraving in the insertion of colours. So pray write immediately for the original in colours, and I will commence the moment I receive it. It may come by the Courier quite safe.

* * * * *

Rome, April 15th, 1830.

* * * You ask me what shall be done with the profits of our work to poor Keats's memory. Now I have thought a good deal of it, and am going to propose *that we erect a monument to his memory here in Rome* to the full extent of the money arising from the sale of the work. I have consulted Gibson, who says that for 200*l.* something very handsome may be made. I have a subject in my mind for the Basso Rilievo, which I think I once mentioned to you before. It is Keats sitting with his half-strung lyre—the three Fates arrest him—one catches his arm—another cuts the thread—and the third pronounces his end. This would make a beautiful Basso Rilievo, and as the grave stone is so unworthy him, and so absurd (as all people say), and as the spot is so beautiful, I hope you will agree to it. Gibson seem'd very much taken with the idea of placing a work of his on this spot.

I knew Keats as far back as 1813. I was introduced to him by Haslam. He was then studying at Guy's Hospital, yet much inclined to the Muses. I remember on the second meeting he read me the Sonnet on Solitude, in which is the line

To start the wild bee from the foxglove bell.[1]

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[1] The line is

Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.

See Volume I, page 71.

He was at that time more playful in his manner, the world seem'd to have nothing to do with him. Poetry was evidently at that time his darling hope. He disliked the surgery, and complained that his guardian, Mr. Abbey, forced him to it against his will. He was introduced to Mr. Hunt, I think, in 1814 or '15, which wrought a great change in him. It confirmed him in his future career, and I think intoxicated him with an excess of enthusiasm which kept by him 4 or 5 years, perhaps until you knew him. This was injurious to him, as Hunt and others not only praised his works and spoke of them as faultless, but even advised him to publish them. Now, merit as they then had, they were not fit things to offer to the world, and I have always thought that that publication was in a great measure the reason poor Keats did not sooner acquire the power of finishing his works. At the same time, he got a kind of mawkishness [?] also from Hunt, which to my thinking was a fault, and which he got rid of when he came to live with you. Yet that first volume gives a good idea of his beautiful character—of one who, on his death bed, acknowledged that his greatest pleasure, in almost every period of his life, had been in watching the growth of flowers and trees—and it [was] thro' this medium that he was so profound in the Greek Mythology. At my first acquaintance with him he gave me the compleat idea of a Poet—'twas an imagination so tempered by gentleness of manner and steady vivacity, that I never saw him without arguing on his future success. At that time he had no morose feeling, or even idea. He never spoke of any one, but by saying something in their favor, and this always so agreeably and cleverly, imitating the manner to increase your favorable impression of the person he was speaking of. At that time he was not well acquainted with painting, but soon acquired a very deep knowledge of it. Indeed, I used to observe that he had a great power of acquiring knowledge of all kinds, for, after a few years, he used to talk so agreeably on Painting and Music, that I was charmed with him, and have often spent whole days with him devoted to these things. The only difference in his personal appearance at first was that he had not that look of deep thought, but, as I said, his look and manner were more playful.

How long shall [you] be occupied on this work? I would like to know that I may be ready with the Engraving. The original miniature I should like to have had, for yours, good as it is, will render my engraving a mere copy from a copy—yet I am content and anticipate that I shall succeed. I think the picture well calculated for an Engraving.

* * * * *

I do not know Haslam's address. He knew Keats before I did.

Rome, March 14th, 1834.

Now I don't know what you'll say to the request I am going to make, that you come off to Rome without a moment's delay and bring Keats's Tragedy with you. There are here 5 Englishmen, who have all been together at Cambridge. They are devoted admirers of Keats, and as they are really clever fellows I must confess myself gratified with their attentions to me as the friend of Keats. Now you must know that they have been acting—two of them are first rate—and they made me join them in the 4th Act of the "Merchant of Venice" as Gratiano, when I was so much struck with one (Mr. O'Brien) as the very man for Ludolph in Keats's "Otho." His voice and manner of reading remind me most forcibly of Keats himself. When I mentioned to them the tragedy they were all on fire to be at it, but I did not see any hope until I heard from Capt. Baynes, who is also an actor, that we could easily have the beautiful private Theatre here. I then recollected how much some years since you would have liked to have had the Tragedy acted in Rome, when there were private theatricals, and I think how much more you would like it done now by ***devoted admirers of Keats, good actors, and handsome young men*** into the bargain. I assure you that I think it would be well done, and as they are all young men of rank, it would certainly be a good report to its forthcoming. Should you not be able to come yourself, nor even Charley, to play the Page, cannot you send me the MSS. by the return of Post? I will be particular that no copies be taken in any way.

Now I wonder what you will say to all this. Is there any possibility that you throw cold water upon it?

And now I am going to wrangle with you. Here I have heard and heard of Keats's Life which you are doing; I have written and written to you about it, and now I hear nothing more, now, when the world is looking for it, and the Tragedy. Why, you would be astonished, were you to know the many who come to me as the friend of Keats, and who idolise him as another Shakespear. 'Tis an injustice to withhold these two works any longer. I remember you said "the public should never have the Tragedy until they had done justice to Keats's other works." *The time has come, and* I FEAR THE TIME MAY PASS. These young men read and recite Keats to me, until I think him more beautiful than ever. (I am dying for them to see the tragedy.) Then there is another point—the Public is wrong about Keats himself. L^{d} Byron and L. Hunt have most vilely led them astray. I persuade myself that Keats's life will be a most interesting subject. If you will go on, I will send you everything I can think of, and I am sure I can supply much. If you will not, I mean to defy you, and try and write his Life myself, which I am sure will make you look about you.

* * * * *

Now tell me what you have to say by way of excuse. It cannot be, save that you do not know how high Keats's fame has risen—that if he is not the Poet of the million, he is more, for I would say that, judging of the talents of his admirers and their rank as scholars, that his fame is a proud one. So now, my dear Brown, I send this off Saturday ev^{g}—you'll hear Tuesday morn^{g}—and I shall receive the Tragedy Saturday.

Rome, July 13th, 1836.

* * * I inquired about the new edition of Keats, as I was invited to embellish it to any extent, and have some nice ideas for it. Be sure you tell me what movement it makes. Many kind lovers of Keats's poetry offer to subscribe to make him a monument. Gibson made a liberal offer to do it for whatever might be subscribed, which I made known to poor Woodhouse without receiving any answer. Now I have come to the determination *that I will accept these subscriptions*, and let Gibson make a beautiful monument, either to be placed here or in England. Tell me what are your thoughts, but don't tell me you set your face against it, for *so I will have it. I can collect a handsome sum. I am an artist myself, and a fine work I'll have.* As you have call'd me an old man, I'll e'en do something to grace my years.

* * * * *

I am just going to write to Mr. Milnes about Keats's tomb. I feel sure that 500*l.* could be easily got, and this, let me tell you, would be useful and even honorable to his reputation. The present grave stone, with its inscription, is an eye sore to me and more, for as I am sought out and esteem'd as his friend something is look'd for from me, and something I will have. I have thought to have the beautiful profile of Girometti's on the upper part, surrounded with architectural flowers in the Greek style—underneath a bas-relief (the subject of which I have not determined, and will not, until you give your ideas, for I'll do nothing without you except your denial—with that I'll have nothing to do). George Keats ought to subscribe, but I have the right, as Keats's last friend, and also as an artist, to the management. After the Monument is up, I'll plant the most beautiful Laurels and Cypresses ever seen, and attend to the keeping them fresh to the extreem days of my old age, for I feel that I owe much to the name of Keats being so often linked with mine. It has given the Public an impression which has ensured me a good career, much as it was denied to him.

Now I dare say you will think all this very vain on my part, and throw cold water upon me and that; but no, I am too old to be damped by you. You may encourage me to any thing, but I won't be put down. *Keats shall have a fine monument*, and I will produce fine historical works, worthy of his friend.

* * * * *

Where is George Keats, and has he not made a handsome fortune? I was told so by an American who knew him—he spites you as to the M.S.S.———

19, Brook Street, August 21st, 1838.

* * * What are you doing about Keats's Life? If you have printed, pray let me have it. I am stirring up here for a new edition of his and Shelley's works. It is shamefully unjust that you all on the spot do not pull together and catch this nice moment for Keats. Tell me the difficulties in the way of a new and compleat edition of him. Trelawny and I talk it over, and determine on having beautiful engravings in it. I have got very pretty ideas for it. Gibson will give us many things. I assure you Keats stands so high with all the aspiring young men, particularly the aristocrats, that a book would take. I'll do anything to help it on, even for my own sake, as I am so proud of having been Keats's friend, seeing how people are disposed to caress me for his sake.

We are about a new project: Trelawny and I, of course. It is to let the good feeling go on, and have a group in marble by Gibson of Shelley and Keats together, to be placed somewhere in London. Isn't this a beautiful idea? What a subject for sculpture! What a fine tribute to the men, friends as they were, and making greater—both Greek poets, and both with fine and young poet looks. Now don't throw cold water upon it. I'll raise plenty of money to do it, and Gibson made a liberal offer. That stir in Parliament about Lord Byron's statue was my doing, and now I'll be an agitator about Keats. Tell me about George Keats, and also about Taylor, and poor Woodhouse's papers. I knew he had the tragedy copied, he told me so himself—it was from the love he bore Keats, and foreseeing there might be difficulties in the way of bringing his works together for a new edition.

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IX.

SOME ACCOUNT OF GEORGE KEATS

BY THE REV. JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE

published in *The Dial* for April 1843:

WITH EXTRACTS FROM HIS LETTERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DIAL.

Dear Sir,—When last at your house I mentioned to you that I had in my possession a copy of some interesting remarks upon Milton, hitherto unpublished, by John Keats the poet. According to your wish I have copied them for your periodical. But I wish, with your permission, to say here how they came in my possession; and in doing this I shall have an opportunity of giving the

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The letters and extracts given at the end have been selected from a large mass of George Keats's writing with a special view to illustrate the tenacity with which he held to John's memory. There are scarcely any passages that would not illustrate equally well the manly English character of George, his sterling qualities in all the relations of life, his independence, and his unaffected capacity for affairs. His letters are good letters without the slightest pretension to be anything but means of communicating what he wants to say; and I think the extracts I have given well calculated to convince any one of George's title to that niche in the temple of his brother's fame which he owns to having coveted. All the letters beginning "My dear Sir" are to Charles Wentworth Dilke, and many which opened in that stiff manner closed with the warmer "My dear Dilke" or other such phrase. Other letters from George Keats will be found in Volume III, at pages 132-3, and in Volume IV, at pages 77-8 and 116.

imperfect tribute of a few words of remembrance to a noble-minded man and a dear friend, now no more an inhabitant of this earth.

Several years ago I went to Louisville, Ky., to take charge of the Unitarian church in that city. I was told that among those who attended the church was a brother of the poet Keats, an English gentleman, who had resided for many years in Louisville as a merchant. His appearance, and the shape of his head arrested attention. The heavy bar of observation over his eyes indicated the strong perceptive faculties of a business man, while the striking height of the head, in the region assigned by phrenology to veneration, was a sign of nobility of sentiment, and the full development behind marked firmness and practical energy. All these traits were equally prominent in his character. He was one of the most intellectual men I ever knew. I never saw him when his mind was inactive. I never knew him to acquiesce in the thought of another. It was a necessity of his nature to have his own thought on every subject; and when he assented to your opinion, it was not acquiescence but agreement. Joined with this energy of intellect was a profound intellectual modesty. He perceived his deficiency in the higher reflective faculties, especially that of a philosophical method. But his keen insight enabled him fully to appreciate what he did not himself possess. Though the tendency of his intellect was wholly critical, it was without dogmatism and full of reverence for the creative faculties. He was thoroughly versed in English literature, especially that of the Elizabethan period, a taste for which he had probably imbibed from his brother and his friends Leigh Hunt and others. This taste he preserved for years in a region, where scarcely another could be found who had so much as heard the names of his favourite authors. The society of such a man was invaluable, if only as intellectual stimulus. It was strange to find, on the banks of the Ohio, one who had successfully devoted himself to active pursuits, and who yet retained so fine a sensibility for the rarest and most evanescent beauties of ancient song.

The intellectual man was that which you first saw in George Keats. It needed a longer acquaintance before you could perceive, beneath the veil of a high-bred English reserve, that profound sentiment of manly honor, that reverence for all Truth, Loftiness, and Purity, that ineffaceable desire for inward spiritual sympathy, which are the birthright of all in whose veins flows the blood of a true poet.

George Keats was the most manly and self-possessed of men—yet full of inward aspiration and conscious of spiritual needs. There was no hardness in his strong heart, no dogmatism in his energetic intellect, no pride in his self-reliance. Thus he was essentially a religious man. He shrunk from pietism, but revered piety.

The incidents of his life bore the mark of his character. His mind, stronger than circumstances, gave them its own stamp, instead of receiving theirs. George Keats, with his two younger brothers,[1] Thomas and John, were left orphans at an early age. They were placed by their guardian at a private boarding school, where the impetuosity of the young poet frequently brought him into difficulties, where he needed the brotherly aid of George. John was very apt to get into a fight with boys much bigger than himself, and George, who seldom fought on his own account, very often got into a battle to protect his brother.[1] These early adventures helped to bind their hearts in a very close and lasting affection.

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[1] John was his elder brother, as stated elsewhere. Very likely the fact that George was a bigger boy led to the oft-repeated mistake about the relative ages. It will be seen that further on mention is made of his having married when he came of age. If so he came of age in 1818, for he certainly married in that year. I apprehend there is no real doubt on the subject; but if further evidence be needed, there is a letter dated the 23rd of November 1833 in which he says "I am in my 37th year." Had John lived till that time he would have been in his 39th year.

After leaving school, George was taken into his guardian's counting room, where he stayed a little while, but left it, because he did not choose to submit to the domineering behavior of the younger partner. Yet he preferred to bear the accusation of being unreasonable, rather than to explain the cause which might have made difficulty. He lived at home, keeping house with his two brothers, and doing nothing for some time, waiting till he should be of age, and should receive his small inheritance. Many said he was an idle fellow, who would never come to any good; but he felt within himself a conviction that he could make his way successfully through the world. His guardian, a wise old London merchant, shared this opinion, and always predicted that George would turn out well.

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[1] The following anecdote told by the Louisville Correspondent of the New York *World* (25 June 1877) is not inapt to the passage in the text: "John Keats's biographers speak of a pugnacious disposition displayed in his early boyhood of such a marked nature that his school-fellows believed him destined to be a great soldier. This characteristic seems not to have been lacking in his brother George, for he was the hero of what Prentice in the Louisville *Journal* called the most gentlemanlike mill on record. At this time Louisville was represented in Congress by James L. Breckinridge, a man eminent for his courtly bearing and handsome appearance; in fact, *le grand seigneur*. These two gentlemen had some business difference which led to intemperate words and then to blows. Their friends hearing of the difficulty were much astonished to hear that Mr. Keats had not been badly whipped, for Mr. Breckinridge was much the larger and stronger of the two. In a region where the slightest personal difficulty was settled according to the duelling code, this novel manner of warfare between two prominent men created no small sensation, and is spoken of even now as among the occurrences in the early history of Louisville; indeed, it must have been an amusing sight to have witnessed these gentlemen, in high collars, white stocks and strapped trousers punching away at one another as viciously as though they had been the 'Little Chicken' and the 'Fibbing Pet.'" I give this for what it may be worth, not knowing anything of the authority on which it rests; but I am bound to mention that the Correspondent, whose many blunders are noted à propos of the great Winchester letter at pages 3 to 34 of this volume, is at fault even as to the number of George's children: he enumerates but seven instead of eight, omitting the second daughter, Rosalind, who died early.

His first act on coming of age did not seem, to the worldly wise, to favor this view. He married a young lady, the daughter of a British Colonel, but without fortune, and came with her to America. They did not, however, act without reflection. George had only four or five thousand dollars, and knew that if he remained in London, he could not be married for years. Nor would he be able to support his wife in any of the Atlantic cities, in the society to which they had been accustomed. But by going at once to the West, they might live, without much society, to be sure, but yet with comfort, and the prospect of improving their condition. Therefore see this boy and girl, he twenty-one and she sixteen, leaving home and friends, and going to be happy in each other's love, in the wild regions beyond the Alleghanies. Happy is he whose first great step in life is the result not of outward influences, but of his own well considered purpose. Such a step seems to make him free for the rest of his days.

Journeys were not made in those days as they are now. Mr. Keats bought a carriage and horses in Philadelphia, with which he travelled to Pittsburgh, and then they descended the Ohio in a keel-boat, sending their horses on by land to Cincinnati. This voyage of six hundred miles down the river was full of romance to these young people. No steam-boat then disturbed, with its hoarse pantings, the sleep of those beautiful shores. Day after day, they floated tranquilly on, as through a succession of fairy lakes, sometimes in the shadow of the lofty wooded bluff, sometimes by the side of wide-spread meadows, or beneath the graceful overhanging branches of the cotton-wood and sycamore. Sometimes, while the boat floated lazily along, the young people would go ashore and walk through the woods across a point, around which the river made a bend. All uncertain as their prospects were, they could easily, amid the luxuriance of nature, abandon themselves to the enjoyment of the hour.

Mr. Keats made a visit of some months to Henderson, Ky., where he resided in the same house with Mr. Audubon, the naturalist. He was still undetermined what to do. One day, he was trying to chop a log, and Audubon, who had watched him for some time, at last said,—"I am sure you will do well in this country, Keats. A man who will persist, as you have been doing, in chopping that log, though it has taken you an hour to do what I could do in ten minutes, will certainly get along here." Mr. Keats said that he accepted the omen, and felt encouraged by it.

After investing the greatest part of his money in a boat, and losing the whole of it, he took charge of a flour mill, and worked night and day with such untiring energy, that he soon found himself making progress. After a while he left this business and engaged in the lumber trade, by which in the course of some years he accumulated a handsome fortune.[1] In the course of this business he was obliged to make visits to the lumberers, which often led him into wild scenes and adventures. Once, when he was taking a journey on horseback, to visit some friends on the British Prairie, he approached the Wabash in the afternoon, at a time when the river had overflowed its banks. Following the horse path, for there was no carriage road, he came to a succession of little lakes, which he was obliged to ford. But when he reached the other side it was impossible to find the path again, and equally difficult to regain it by recrossing. The path here went through a cane-brake, and the cane grew so close together that the track could only be distinguished when you were actually upon it. What was to be done? There was no human being for miles around, and no one might pass that way for weeks. To stop or to go on seemed equally dangerous. But at last Mr. Keats discovered the following expedient, the only one perhaps, that could have saved him. The direction of the path he had been travelling was east and west. He turned and rode toward the south, until he was sure that he was to the South of the track. He then returned slowly to the North, carefully examining the ground as he passed along, until at last he found himself crossing the path, which he took, and reached the river in safety.[1]

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[1] A saw-mill preceded the flour-mill in the business experiences of George Keats; so that this subsequent engagement in the lumber trade was not altogether a novelty. The second letter given among the Extracts at the close of this appendix is one of the last he sent to his brother, and relates both to the boat and to the saw-mill, which last was in operation at all events by the end of 1820. In a letter written in May 1830 he speaks of having entered into a partnership in an extensive timber concern for five years beginning on the 1st of January 1830; and this is no doubt the business mentioned by Mr. J. F. Clarke.

George Keats not only loved his brother John, but reverenced his genius, and enjoyed his poetry, believing him to belong to the front rank of English bards. Modern criticism seems disposed to concur with this judgment. A genuine and discriminating appreciation of his brother's poetry always gave him great pleasure. He preserved and highly prized John's letters, and unpublished verses, the copy of Spenser filled with his works, which he had read when a boy, and which had been to him a very valuable source of poetic inspiration, and a Milton in which were preserved in a like manner John's marks and comments. From a fly-leaf of this book, I was permitted to copy the passages I now send you.[1] I know not whether you will agree with me in their being among the most striking criticisms we possess upon this great Author. That the love of the brothers was mutual, appears from the following lines from one of John's poems, inscribed "To my brother George."

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[1] Here is another cane-brake reminiscence from one of his letters to his sister. He is describing the character of one John Bull, a Kentuckian with whom he had travelled :—

"Punning is his Antipodes, and yet he laughed when I transfixed him with one. The Steam Boat on which we travelled was detained by ice about half way up the Mississippi, and we went out a gunning; after we were tired out with unsuccess, we desired to strike straightway for our boat, in our course we got entangled in a cane break, so high and so nearly impenetrable that we almost despaired of getting out of it; we were confident of our direction but the thickets almost made our progress in the right course impossible; I mounted a tree about 25 or 30 Feet to look out and distinguish a somewhat less obstructed way; again we came to a stand from the same causes as before; when it was Bull's turn to climb which did not prove to him so easy as it had done to me, for he lost his wind, and for a time could neither ascend or descend, while he was in momentary fear of falling it struck me what an odd thing it was to see a Bull up in a tree, which he looked as much like as anything else thro' the mass of foliage, when in the very midst of his trouble I cried out to him that I had heard of Bears climbing trees but I never expected to see a Bull at such an altitude. He reserved his laugh untill a short residence on terra firma had restored his breath: this was good nature."

"As to my sonnets, though none else should heed them,
I feel delighted, still, that you should read them.
Of late too, I have had much calm enjoyment,
Stretched on the grass at my best loved employment,
Of scribbling lines to you—"

Less than two years ago,[2] in the prime of life and the midst of usefulness, George Keats passed into the spiritual world. The city of Louisville lost in him one of its most public-spirited and conscientious citizens. The Unitarian Society of that place lost one who, though he had been confirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, was too honest not to leave the popular and fashionable church for an unpopular faith, which was more of a home to his mind. For myself, I have ever felt that it was quite worth my while to go and live in Louisville, if I had gained thereby nothing but the knowledge and friendship of such a man. I did not see him in his last days. I was already living in a distant region. But when he died, I felt that I had indeed lost a friend. We cannot hope to find many such in this world. We are fortunate if we find any. Yet I could not but believe that he had gone to find his brother again among

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[1] See Volume III, page 18.

[2] According to the Louisville Correspondent of the New York *World* (25 June 1877), George Keats died in 1842, "immediately after he had sustained a severe pecuniary embarrassment, occasioned by the failure of a friend, whose paper he had largely indorsed."

"The spirits and intelligences fair,
And angels waiting on the Almighty's chair."

The love for his brother, which continued through his life to be among the deepest affections of his soul, was a pledge of their reunion again in the spirit-land.

Perhaps I have spoken too much of one who was necessarily a stranger to most of your readers. But I could not bear that he should pass away and nothing be said to tell the world how much went with him. And the Dial, which he always read, and in whose aims he felt a deep interest, though not always approving its methods, seems not an improper place, nor this a wholly unsuitable occasion, for thus much to be said concerning GEORGE KEATS.

With much regard yours,

J. F. C.

Boston, March 13, 1843.

LETTERS AND EXTRACTS.

Liverpool—Sunday Morn—Jany 30th 1820

My dear Fanny

I considered not taking a final leave of you a misfortune, and regretted very much that constant occupation detained me from coming to Walthamstow; but now I look upon the pain attending the last good bye, and shake of the hand as well spared, and reflect on the pleasure of seeing you again at however remote a period; when you will be a *Woman* and I a "*bald Pate.*" I arrived here last night after a rather disagreeable ride of 36 hours,[1] and engaged a passage in the Courier—Capt[ai]n

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[1] This confirms the supposition hazarded in the note at page 51

Eldridge, for New York—before I went to bed; she will sail on the first, Tuesday next. In this said English Feather bed I was in a greater risk to lose my life than thro' all my journey from Louisville to London. Before going to bed I thought it prudent to clear my stomach of bile, and took calomel; a cold taken while this is operating on the system frequently proves fatal, it opens the pores of the skin, and allows the inflammation to lay complete hold of one. Not having slept for two nights, I remained dead asleep while water was dripping thro' the ceiling, untill it had penetrated thro' all the clothes, the feather bed and the mattrass. The instant I awoke I jumped out of bed, called the servants, and was put into a fresh bed, fully expecting to be laid up, but this morning to my astonishment I find myself well; you see if I can stand water when it nearly floats me in my bed without injury I cannot be born to be drowned. Mr. Abbey behaved very kindly to me before I left, for which I am sure you will feel grateful. He is attentive in his commerce with his fellows in all essentials. He observes with pleasure the pleasure communicated to others; he says you sometimes look thin and pale, but he thinks that you have been better since you have run about a little feeding chickens, attending your little cat &c. A man of coarse feeling would never notice these things. He expressed surprise that neither you nor Miss A. spoke at meals; so you see it is not his wish

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of this volume, that George left London at 6 a.m. on the 28th of January, from which time to Saturday evening would be just 36 hours. It is right to say that the original letter has the year inserted as "1819"; but unquestionably this was an instance of a clerical error very common in January,—seeing that the 30th of January 1819 was not a Sunday and George Keats was in America, not at Liverpool, on that day.

that you should be moped and silent, therefore cheer up and look lively as nature made you. I shall hear from John from time to time about you, as you will of me.

I am, dear Fanny
Your very affectionate Brother
George

Louisville Nov. 8th 1820.

My dear John

Again, and again I must send bad news. I cannot yet find a purchaser for the Boat, and have received no intelligence of the man who offered the price I accepted, it was only 500 dollars more than the sum she cleared me last year. If I were to lower the price 500 dollars it would be as difficult of Sale. I hope to be able to send you money soon, until I do I shall be fast approaching the blue devil temperament. Your inevitable distresses are subject of conversation to us almost every day, we wish you were here until we could launch you into the world again with present means and future prospects. Had the Mill been finished within *a year* of the time agreed upon in my contract with the Builders you should not have wanted money now, it was not finished within 21 mo[nth]s, such a disappointment driving me to every shift to live, rent and servant hire unpaid, will weigh heavy upon me some time. The present is all I fear, by next Autumn I hope to live in a house and on ground of my own,[1] with returns at least three times my expenses, my gain now is double my expenses, without receiving for my service which will be well paid as soon as my experience in the Business will justify my asking an allowance; our firm is "Geo. Keats & Co."; my partners are the principal Iron founders in the western Country. I receive and pay all. They keep the engine in order, without expense to the Comp[an]y. Almost every day I am in the woods superintending the felling of Trees and cutting saw logs, and the ground tinged with leaves reminds me of your little prospects of breathing a milder air this winter, such thoughts frequently render our fireside melancholy, if you fail us we lose the most material objects for which we now toil and save, in fact the goal to which we stretch is a future residence in England, and a communion once more with those who understand us and love us, you are the most prominent in our minds as one of those, your distress is ours. Here we are not understood if our conduct will bear two constructions, the worst is put upon it. Altho we have connections we have no genuine exercise of kindly feelings but between ourselves: we are happy in being most comfortable at home, where I arrive and am received with pleasure to every meal. We are not yet hacknied, careless man and Wife, we have no quarrels now altho we had many before marriage, we are both major domo, and yet we are neither major domo, we live so quietly people hardly know what to make of us. All we want at present is your health and happiness. Marriage might do you good, I will not offer any fusty

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[1] The house which George expected to have was built for his residence " by the concern in which " he was " the acting partner and one third owner," in the immediate vicinity of the saw-mills. In 1822 he wrote to his sister that he was working early and late with an industry and perseverance that astonished the " lazy Kentuck-

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ians." It was not till 1823 that he realized more than his expenses; and in the middle of 1825 he was attending to the erection of a flour-mill in addition to his usual employment of looking after the saw-mill.

remarks, but assure you that had I to chuse again I would marry and suffer as I have done, to common observers no marriage could have been more unpromising than ours. Give our love to Fanny, Mrs. Wylie, Henry, Charles; we are su[r]prised we have no news from them. Give our best rem[embrance]s to the Brawn[e]s, Reynolds, Dilk[e]s, Brown, Rice and Haslam. Haslam does not appear to have received the letter in which I informed him that the articles Kent proposes to send are totally unsaleable here, where almost every man is pressed for market money. If we meet a safe opportunity for England we will send Miss Brawn[e] an india Crape dress or merino shawl or something scarce with you but cheap with us. She has our thanks for her kindness during your illness. Our little live thing as George calls her is in good health and offers bread and butter and Apple-wottie to Uncle John every day.[1] If Brooks, Stationer, Oxford St. has not started for this Country before your book is out, we shall expect it by him. I sent Reynolds Waverly, has he received it? To see your handwriting will be a great comfort to your Affectionate Brother and Sister.

I am your Brother George.

Louisville. Kentucky. Jan. 7. 1822

My dearest Fanny

* * * * *

I hoped before this to have received from you an answer of my letter to you, commiserating with you on the death of our dear Brother; that dreadful misfortune leaves us more necessary to each others happiness; it leaves me your natural Guardian and if circumstances should throw you from under the protection of that good Man Mr. Abbey, I have a happy and cheerful home to make you comfortable.

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[1] By way of attestation, presumably having her hand guided, the poet's niece signed below her father; for at foot of the letter we read the words—"Signed. Georgiana Emily Keats."

* * * * *

Louisville April 10th 1824
Kentucky

My dear Sir

I cannot let pass an opportunity of sending letters by a sure hand without addressing one to you, as the man numbered among the Friends of my Brother John the least likely to be influenced by those reports so injurious to my honor—Brotherly affection—common honesty—which have so cruelly estranged others whose good opinion of me I had hoped would have required stronger testimony to have removed. Entertaining as I do the utmost certainty of your Friendship I will not make any excuses for troubling you with the proof that I not only did not wrong my Brother in money concerns but that I owed him little or nothing, and if I did that it was impossible to remit, being without the means. Thro' a relation of Mr. Taylor's now living at Cincinnati I heard that he had been informed that I had brought away 700£ of John's money: to show that it was impossible that he could be in possession of that sum clears me to that large amount, leaving it possible that I may have taken all he had, and if I show that all he had was probably owing to me, as far as common transactions go I am cleared altogether. John and I left school at the same time—he immediately paid 200 Guineas and expences to be bound to a Surgeon and during his apprenticeship spent more than the interest of his money. I was with my Guardian at no expense: between the time of John's leaving the surgeon and his coming of age, he and Tom (who had been with Mr. Abbey and left him) spent 3 times their income, to make up a considerable part of which I borrowed and p[ai]d when I became of age, besides the various sums John had to pay for dressership and Fees, books and instruments which Mr. A. advanced for him; thus you see my Brothers' property rapidly dim[in]ishing and mine stationary. The first material reduction of mine was paying debts contracted on their account principally Tom's, whose expenses were considerably encreased by his sickness, and his income comparatively trifling.[1]

* * * * *

John himself was ignorant of the real state of his funds, it was so painful a subject and in our private communications he was so extremely melancholy that I always had to shew him the pleasing side of things; when I left London I had not courage to say that the 700£ I had obtained was not all ours by right, but he never thought and never could have informed any one of his Friends that the whole was his. I never considered it necessary to let him know the rights of it, since I did not intend to limit my remittances but by my means: * * * my inability to remit has been occasioned by the faults of others not by any extravagance or carelessness of my own, I could no more help myself than in a storm at sea. Altho' in justice I do not owe my Bro[ther's] estate a shilling I will do my utmost to liquidate his debts, it was always my intention to keep him under the idea that I was in his debt, in the case of Taylor and Hessey I promised payment and have given my notes. It is possible this explanation may not make any alteration in the opinion entertained of my integrity; if it do not I must submit to let my character remain black untill I can whiten it by paying John's debts.—I wrote an explanation to this effect about 2 years since but upon a reconsideration I would not send it to the party to whom it was addressed, Haslam or Brown should have had it long ago if I could have submitted to offer palliatives to men who domineered as they did.

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[1] At this point George goes over the figures elaborately. I do not think they need be inserted. Suffice it to say they satisfied the acute judgment of Mr. Dilke, and that George's statement was verified by Mr. Abbey (see next letter), though Brown persisted in his charges to such a point that finally a rupture between Brown and Dilke was the result.

You will oblige me much by writing what is the impression concerning this matter, please to mention if Severn was with John when he died, where a letter will find him, and what you know interesting about John for the last year of his life, about which I am entirely ignorant, his last letters to me were so melancholy that I feared it would terminate with our Family Complaint. I have not even the last book that he published, and should be highly gratified with your opinion of its merits, if it sustained or injured his poetical reputation. Did you hear what became of John's books &c. There were some miniatures which can be of no value to any body but me, it is likely Mr. Brown or Severn knows what became of them.—Blackwood's magazine has fallen into my hands, I could have walked 100 miles to have dirked him a l'Americaine, for his cruelly associating John in the Cockney school and other blackguardisms. [Suc]h paltry ridicule will have wounded deeper than the severe[st] criticism particularly as he regarded what is called the Cockney[ism] of the coterie with so much disgust. He either knew John well and touched him in the tenderest place purposely, or knew nothing of him and supposed he went all lengths with the set in their festering opinions and cockney affectations. I do not know that my feelings against Blackwood on John's account mislead me, but I cannot help feeling surprised that such persevering cruelty could have been borne by the public, or passed by by the parties rediculed [*sic*] without revenge. I have read plenty of unfair criticism, but this seems an exterminating blackguardism of Persons not of writings, that required other answer than the "paper bullets of the brain." That there was a cockney school that deserved redicule I do not doubt, and probably John at the age of 14 and 15 was a little infected, but I do not see that either *he* or *John Reynolds* as *I knew him* should have been embodied with it.

* * * * *

Louisville, Kentucky, April 28th. 1824

My dear Fanny

'Tis now the early budders are just new
And spread in mazes of the youngest hue
About old Forests [1]

this season never comes round without reminding me of these lines, and many others equally appropriate, and beautiful of our dear John; the Horse chesnut Trees or as they are here called the "Buckeyes" (named I presume from the resemblance of its fruit to the beautiful large dark brown eye of the deer) are now so large in leaf as to tint the woods with green, the orchards which are numerous and extensive are in richest blossom, pink and white, Peaches Apples and Cherries, some blue grass we have sown round the House and along the walks of the

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[1] Misquoted from *Endymion*. See Volume I, page 123.

Garden is about an inch out of the Ground, and our vegetables are coming forward rapidly, keeping pace with your spring, we are generally about a month earlier. With the exception of the blue bird resembling in shape and habits the robin, we have nothing musical in the feathered tribe to usher in the spring, no blackbird, thrush, linnet, Goldfinch, or earliest Cuckoo ; our woods ring with the harsh cries of innumerable woodpeckers of gaudy plumage and ungraceful form, but no tender Nightingale sings his melodious song. We sometimes see at an enormous height a flight of swans, flying in the form of a wedge, after the manner of ducks and Geese ; Storks and cranes of very large size frequently fish in the shallow water of the falls within sight of the House, and when hunting in solitary places I have seen most noble eagles. When in England this season used to elevate my spirits promising pleasant summer, but now it is only agreeable in itself promising long sultry days and perhaps sickness, this spring being very backward is however esteemed favorable to health, you shall hear as the season advances how we get on.—

* * * * *

Your face is decidedly not spanish, but English all over. If I fancied you to resemble Don Quixote I should fancy a handsome intelligent melancholy countenance, with something wild but benevolent about the eyes, a lofty Forehead but not very broad, with finely arched eyebrows denoting candour and generosity. He is an immense favorite of mine and I cannot help feeling angry with the great Cervantes for bringing him into situations where he is the laughing stock of minds so inferior to his own, it is evident he was a great favorite of the author and it is evident he was united with the chivalric spirits he so wittily redicules: he is made to speak as much sound sense, elevated morallity [*sic*] and true piety, as any divine who ever wrote; if I were to meet with such a man I should almost hate myself for laughing at his eccentricities.—

* * * * *

Louisville Feb 7. 1825

My dear Fanny

* * * * *

Mrs. K has been confined with her fourth Girl, we hoped for a boy to name him after poor John, who altho' so long gone from us is constantly in our minds; his miniature over our mantelpiece is partly hidden by a hyacinth in bloom; Shakespeare is next above him, Tom at the top, Beaumont and Fletcher on either side. * * * The most lively recollection I have of you relates to times which I expect you have almost forgotten, when we lived with our Grandmother at Edmonton, and John, Tom and myself were always devising plans to amuse you, jealous lest you should prefer either of us to the others.

* * * * *

I am very much gratified to hear that Miss Brawne is an amiable Girl and that eccentricity has deceived my informants into the belief that she is unworthy, few things could give me more pleasure than to hear that the Lady of my dear Friend and Brother John's choice should be worthy of him. I trust I shall never forget Mrs. and Miss B.'s devoted attention to him during his sickness, their kindness to you encreases my debt. When I heard of John's death I reproached myself for having left one so sensitive and hypochondriacal to the bare world, when I perhaps was the only person in it who knew him well enough, who was fitted to releive [*sic*] him of its friction, who was qualified to make things go easy with him. I cannot help thinking that he might now be living if I had remained with him, it is however no little consolation to me and honorable to his Friends that he should have met with so many perseveringly disinterested services at every point that he needed them.—I would write something about his works if I had room, I will now only thank you for sending his last volume, his talents have honoured our name, his excellencies are written in our hearts.

* * * * *

Louisville April 20th 1825

My dear Sir

* * * * *

Your letter has in some measure relieved my mind of a load that has sorely pressed for years. I felt innocent of the unfeeling, mean conduct imputed to me by some of my brother's friends, and knew that the knowledge of the facts would soon set that to rights; but I could not rest while under the impression that he really suffered through my not forwarding him money at the time when I promised, but had not the power. Your saying "that he knew nothing of want, either of friends or money," and giving proofs of the truth of it, made me breathe freely—enabled me to cherish his memory, without the feeling of having caused him misery, however unavoidably, while a living Friend and Brother. I do not doubt but that he complained of me; although he was the noblest fellow, whose soul was ever open to my inspection, his nervous, morbid temperament at times led him to misconstrue the motives of his best friends. I have been instrumental times innumerable in correcting erroneous impressions so formed of those very persons who have been most ready to believe the stories lately circulated against me, and I almost believe that if I had remained his companion, and had had the means, as I had the wish, to have devoted my life to his fame and happiness, he might have been living at this hour. His temper did not unfold itself to you, his friend, until the vigour of his mind was somewhat impaired, and he no longer possessed the power to resist that pettishness he formerly considered he had no right to trouble his friends with. From the time we were boys at school, where we loved, jangled, and fought alternately, until we separated in 1818, I in a great measure relieved him by continual sympathy, explanation, and inexhaustible spirits and good humour, from many a bitter fit of hypochondriasm. He avoided teazing any one with his miseries but Tom and myself, and often asked our forgiveness; venting and discussing them gave him relief. I do not mean to say that he did not receive the most indulgent attention from his many devoted friends; on the contrary, I shall ever look with admiration on the exertions made for his comfort and happiness by his numerous friends. No one in England understood his character perfectly but poor Tom, and he had not the power to divert his frequent melancholy, and eventually increased his disease most fearfully by the horrors of his own lingering death. If I did not feel fully persuaded that my motive was to acquire an independence to support us all in case of necessity, I never should forgive myself for leaving him, some extraordinary exertion was necessary to retrieve our affairs from the gradual decline they were suffering—that exertion I made, whether wisely or not, future events had to decide. After all, Blackwood and the Quarterly, associated with our family disease, consumption, were ministers of death sufficiently venomous, cruel, and deadly, to have consigned one of less sensibility to a premature grave. I have consumed many hours in devising means to punish those literary gladiators, but am always brought to the vexing conclusion that they are invulnerable to one of my prowess. Has much been said in John's defence against those libellers both of his character and writings? His writings were fair game, and liable to be assailed by a sneaking poacher, but his character as represented by Blackwood was not, a good cudgelling should have been his reward if he had been within my reach. John was the very soul of courage and manliness, and as much like the *Holy Ghost* as *Johnny Keats.* I am much indebted for the interest you have taken in my vindication, and will observe further for your satisfaction, that Mr. Abbey, who had the management of our money concerns, in a letter lately received, expressed himself "satisfied that my statement of the account between John and me was correct." He is the only person who is in possession of data to refute or confirm my story. My not having written to you seems to have been advanced as a proof of my worthlessness. If it prove anything, it proves my humility, for I can assure you if I had known you felt one half the interest in my fate unconnected with my brother it appears you did, the explanation would have been made when I first became acquainted there was a necessity for it.—I should never have given up a communication with the only spirits in existence who are congenial to me, and at the same time *know* me—*understand* me, when I failed to write it was not from a diminished respect or friendliness towards you but under the impression that I had moved out of your circle leaving but faint traces that I had ever existed within it.

* * * * *

Since it has fallen on me to pay my Brothers debts I should in Justice have some books or other relicks he may have left behind him. My conduct has been liberally censured, I have been industriously made acquainted with demands against the estate but not a single volume, Picture, bust, Cast—is reserved for me, who I have no hesitation in saying am more nearly allied to poor John in feeling as I am more closely connected in Blood than any other in the whole circle of his Friendships. I have no particular individual in view when I say that those warm feelings which produced such a ready aptitude to censure my supposed falling off, ought to have suggested some little activity to do me justice, when it was known I intended to pay the debts of the estate; I gave my notes to T and H a few mo[nth]s after I heard of John's death. Those effects in the possession of Friends who value them as having been once John's are most heartily welcome to them, I however hope some trifles may be collected for me so that I be not left entirely relickless! More *should* have fallen to your share. What you mention is all I know of Posthumous works, or Copyright, Taylor and Hessey have demanded payment of 150£ for money advanced to John with the expectation of remittances promised by me.

* * * * *

I have . . . directed Mr. Abbey to pay them and should the copyright have been pledged or in fact any other Poems for the same 150£, I am the owner of them. In a letter addressed to Mr. Abbey a few weeks since desiring him to settle with T and H, I neglected to tell him to recover the Copyright if it should appear that I had a right to it—you who understand the business will oblige me very much by calling on him (4 Pancrass [*sic*] Lane) and acquainting him with the probable state of the case; at the end of this I will write an introduction to him, that will render it easy for you to open the business, it is possible you could do it without troubling him, as you please—Writing is so easy to you that it is not tasking you too much to write me all about John and his works that will appear to you interesting to me, of what his Posthumous works consist I have not the slightest knowledge. I think you are right as to what should be the nature of his life and I regret very much that I cannot come to England to consult and give all the information I am in possession of to elucidate his character. My Father was killed by a fall from his Horse and I remember nothing of him but that he had dark hair, I have heard him praised as a man of good sense and very much liked. My mother I distinctly remember, she resembled John very much in the Face, was extremely fond of him and humoured him in every whim, of which he had not a few, she was a most excellent and affectionate parent and as I thought a woman of uncommon talents, she was confined to her bed many years before her death by a rheumatism and at last died of a consumption, she would have sent us to Harrow school as I often heard her say, if she could have afforded. I am not competent to write a life and shall be very happy to communicate any materials I am in possession of to any person to whom I have no positive objection as the author of John's life. Reynolds and yourself are I think every way competent to execute it with truth, feeling, and good taste.

* * * * *

I hope to visit England before trading has worn out my love of letters, and old Friends, and to express personally my gratitude and thanks to that Generous Fellow Rice, and those kind Friends Reynolds, Severn, Brown and particularly yourself and Lady for all your delicate, persevering, untired attention to my needful Brother, who should by right have received those duties from me. Other Friends may not be mentioned who are deserving of my thanks from my ignorance of their kindness, to Mrs. Brawn[e] and her lovely daughter I did intend to have written but on considering the trouble and difficulty of looking after letters, I will be contented for the present with conveying to them thro' you, my best respects and wishes for their happiness, for their welfare.

* * * * *

Louisville June 5th. 1825

My dear Fanny

* * * * *

I have written about 14 days since to Mr. Dilke who I presume will give me all information about John's Works &c, but I should be glad to receive from you any information that may come in your way, I will repeat the request made in my last to forward a copy of Shelley's "Adonais *An Elegy on John.*"

* * * * *

Present my respects to Mrs. and Miss Brawne, and say I should be most happy to hear from the latter if it is only to give me a description of her present self, and you, when I saw her last I remember a young artist complimented her [on] having revived to [*sic*] tasty headdress of the age of Charles the 2nd. I presume her sister is now a full blown Beauty.

* * * * *

New York May 12th 1828

My dear Dilke

* * * * *

Meeting with Hunt's Lord Byron and his Contemporaries has raised in my mind a crowd of old associations, it reminds me that you had some idea of writing a life of John, and of the materials that I am able and willing to furnish for that purpose to you or anyone who is competent to do it well—Hunt's sketch is not altogether a failure but I should be extremely sorry that poor John's name should go down to posterity associated with the littlenesses of L. H., an association of which he was so impatient in his Life time. He speaks of him patronizingly, that he would have defended him against the Reviewers if he had known his nervous irritation at their abuse of him, and says that on that point only he was reserved to him; the fact was he more dreaded Hunt's defence than their abuse—You know all this as well as I do—In conferring upon John what he may consider the loftiest praise, namely, that between them "there was no such thing as obligation, except the pleasure of it." He then tells you that he lived with him, that he lived with Brown, that it was a pleasure to his friends to have him at their Houses &c. Now no Man who ever lived was more impatient of being under an obligation than John, as long as I knew him, and he misled me himself if he did not divide with Brown the expences of House keeping at Hampstead.[1] I have no doubt of Hunt's Friendliness and Hospitallity [*sic*] and it is probable that John accepted an invitation to reside in his House a few weeks and it may have extended to months,[2] such a case is common with other than gifted Men, but it is not the thing to hand down to posterity that John was *born in wretchedness*[1] and lived with spiritless carelessness on Messrs. Hunt and Brown—John was noble and manly, he was more magnanimous in conferring than in receiving a benefit, he felt *too* impatient of obligations. If you wish I will enlarge on these topics, if not I suppose that all I know of John will die with me, for I have not capacity or authorship in me to write his life.

---

[1] When Brown rendered a statement of his running account with Keats he made it clear that the poet's share was duly acquitted up to the end of 1819, that Keats paid him £40 in February 1820, and was behind hand again in May 1820 when they parted, owing to the expenses of the illness, and a loan of £50. George Keats paid the whole balance of the account.

[2] It extended from the 23rd of June to the 12th of August 1820. See pages 87 and 92.

* * * * *

Your Friend
Geo. Keats

Louisville July 12th 1828

My dear Sir

* * * * *

Notwithstanding our long separation you are the man of all others to whom I am most closely allied in feeling, you have had confidence in my integrity when others have condemned me unheard, and I believe, for the most part unregretted, you have proved my friend when (perhaps) *all others* have deserted me, and *taken some trouble* to spread accounts of my unworthiness: Haslam for instance did his best to make Charles Wylie think me a scoundrel, I suspect Brown of the like proceedings where I was open to a still more sensible hurt.

* * * * *

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[1] Against this passage George Keats wrote the following note:—"My Grandfather was very well off as his will shews, and but that he was extremely generous and gullable would have been affluent, I have heard my Grandmother speak with enthusiasm of his excellencies, and Mr Abbey used to say that he never saw a woman of the talents and sense of my Grandmother, except my Mother. I do not remember much of my Mother but her prodigallity [*sic*], and doting fondness for her children, particularly John, who resembled her in the face."

Louisville May 7th 1830

My dear Sir

Your welcome and unwelcome letter of the 7 February arrived this morning, 3 months on the way, we have in the papers London dates of the 7th Apl. The assurance that my exposee of affairs between us is satisfactory, is most welcome, for I have looked upon you as my best friend one half of my life. The threatened life of poor John by Brown, involving the sacrifice of my good name is most unwelcome. The very nature of Brown's mind is such that however much he may intend to honor his memory, he will hurt him as much by false painting as he will me from obstinacy, and misinformation—He has no impulsive instantaneous love of goodness or beauty, his judgement says this is vice, and that is virtue, good taste directs abhorrence of the one and admiration of the other, the detecting and demonstrating the enormity and vileness of the one, gives him as much pleasure, as the acknowledging the excellence of the other. He is nothing if he is not critical. It would give him dissatisfaction to find me blameless, and I doubt if he would confess it, altho John admitted he had good points, he would not much relish his general opinion of him. If he gives up the plan of handling the reviewers roughly, sacrificing the opportunity of picturing a virtuous indignation, he will give up the idea of writing the life, he cannot reach a sufficiently lofty key without such an inspiring accessory. He is the antipodes of John, he is close, painstaking and calculating, John was open, prodigal and had no power of calculating whatever. John's eyes moistened, and his lip quivered at the relation of any tale of generosity of benevolence or noble daring, or at sights of loveliness or distress—he had no fears of self thro' interference in the quarrels of others, he would at all hazzards [*sic*], without calculating his powers to defend, or his reward for the deed, defend the oppressed and distressed with heart and soul with hand and purse. You will remember the tale of his fight with a scoundrel in Livery[1] in a blind Alley at Hampstead about cruelty to a cat—How much of this is like Brown, did not Brown rather laugh at these qualities, and chuckle at the foolery of their exhibition, than love and respect the possessor of them for their sake. He doubtless duly appreciates John's kindness of heart, his generosity of character and general disinterestedness, but it is his genius and notoriety that mainly attracts him, the situations in which the possessor of these noble qualities in their widest sense will be placed, would lead such as Brown into the notion that they were extravagantly indulged in without judgement and prudent caution. Brown has unquestionably good qualities, for God made him and he has kept some good company, and I feel grateful to him for his attentions to John whatever were his *motives, which* never would have been questioned by me if I had not read Hunt's mistakes. I cannot swear that John paid half the expenses of house-keeping with Brown throughout, but I can that it was understood between them that he should, and that a certain sum was due when I was in England, and that John had the money to pay it,[2] and that I believe he did pay up to the time of my departure in 1820, and afterwards I directed Mr. Abbey to pay a demand of Brown's against John of £70 or 80 which I believe was likewise paid, and John having been six months[3] in Rome before his death only leaves about 4 mo[nth]s of his existence in which he to my knowledge could have lived upon the bounty of either Brown or Leigh Hunt "without any such thing as obligation" He having died in December 1820. Hunt entirely mistook his character altho' there are passages in his notice of him that are characteristic and worth preserving, he would accept hospitallity [*sic*] with pleasure but he was not so faultless in the particular that Hunt insists on as not to be most impatient under the obligations of the sort he mentions. Brown knows this, and if Hunt has not told exactly the truth in saying—"Mr. Keats and I were friends of the old stamp, between whom there was no such thing as obligation, except the pleasure of it. He enjoyed the usual privilege of greatness with all whom he knew, rendering it delightful to be obliged by him and an equal, but not a greater delight to oblige. It was a pleasure to his Friends to have him in their houses, and he did not grudge it. When Endymion was published he was living at Hampstead with his Friend Cha^s^. Brown &c"—Brown ought to contradict it. —So that Mr. Cha^s^. Brown and Mr. L. Hunt were the munificent patrons of Jno. Keats. Altho' he was often at Hunt's after Brown went from home in 1820, I presume you know he did not live there, reside there, and I firmly believe that he did not live with Brown one week without a debtor and creditor account being kept of it—If he did, and it is to be bruited to the world, I know John's imperfections well enough to be sure that he would be most anxious to liquidate the debt. Endymion was published before my marriage; and not when John was living with Brown.—I would fain have all expenses paid, for Brown's kindness and attention he can only be paid by the gratitude of [the] world, poor me included, and the satisfaction with which virtue rewards its votaries.

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[1] I suppose this is the butcher of Hunt's and Clarke's recollections.

[2] See note at page 408.

[3] Counting from the departure from England to the death of Keats would be six months. George appears to have been misinformed as to dates.

What fools we mortals are, how we are straining for ever so small a niche in the temple of Fame, I claim being the affectionate Friend and Brother of John Keats. I loved him from boyhood even when he wronged me, for the goodness of his heart and the nobleness of his spirit, before we left school we quarreled often and fought fiercely, and I can safely say and my schoolfellows will bear witness that John's temper was the cause of all, still we were more attached than Brothers ever are—After we left school we never passed an opposing word, he was always melancholy and complaining, devoted and affectionate, and I shall never believe but that it was the want of my ear as a safety valve to let his sorrows escape, that he after *I left England* allowed so many things to prey upon his mind and his health, *therein* was my fault —When I returned in 1820 he was not the same being, altho' his reception of me was as warm as heart could wish, he did not speak with his former openness and unreserve, he had lost the reviving custom of venting his griefs. Brown however will kick me out of this niche, and step into it himself by representing John to have impaired his fortune by liberallity [*sic*] to an unfeeling Brother placing him in a situation to receive obligations from Chas. Brown. There is a passage in Shelley's Adonais (preface) that is gall and wormwood to me, and seeing from Hunt's work that Brown and Shelley were acquainted I cannot but infer that he received from him the false impression, and fear that for the sake of consistency he will repeat the wrong. Where did John get the fortune that he lavished upon me. I certainly promised to remit and should have done so had he owed me £10000, and was justified by my prospects in thinking I should be able, it turned out that I was not able, on the contrary I was more miserably distressed than

John, being as pennyless or more so and having a wife and child to partake of my miseries. I could at the time have exhibited a picture of distress that would have brought tears and forgiveness from John, the reasons why I did not are manifest, he had troubles enough and this would have capped them all. Mrs. K can bear witness, how much I suffered from my inability to remit, taunted as I was by the goading letters of Haslam and Brown. *Knowing* you are persuaded that I did not willingly add one pang to the sorrows of poor John, I *hope* that Rice and Reynolds are of the same opinion, and that the three may influence Brown to blot out from his tablets if not from his mind the obnoxious passage relating to my unworthiness. I do not see how a life of John can be written without noticing the effect that severe reviews and abominable personal reflections had upon his sensitive mind, it ought to be done temperately not for the purpose of cutting at those worthies and exciting their spleen, but as circumstances that surrounded and operated upon the mind and body of the Poet—I am perfectly willing to put you in possession of my recollections of John's early life, of his inward mind and his letters to me which are very long and numerous, and think with you, that Reynolds and not Brown is the man to write it. If [it] were not for the claims my family have upon my time and industry, I would come to England, as [it is] I cannot without making great sacrifices, pray let me hear from you soon, and through some more speedy channel which can be discovered by enquiring of some American Merchant in what way to send letters—in the mean time I will commit to paper my recollections, and take the first safe opportunity to send them, and the letters, to do with them as to you may seem good. I do not however see that if the publication you mention progresses with the ordinary speed of modern times, that there is any probability of my furnishing any matter in time, even if either yourself or Reynolds were to undertake the life. It seems to me *now*, that I have a great deal to communicate altho' it is more than likely, that when I set down, to put it on paper, I shall be as a Flint, that requires a steel, yourself or Reynolds, to come in contact with me to strike a light—

* * * * *

Louisville. Nov. 22nd 1830.

My dear Dilke

I would not allow Mrs Cuthbertson to leave this for London without conveying to you my best wishes and kindest regards, I have not time to dwell upon any subject whatever and I am sorry to confess that I have left undone the sketch of my Brother's life that I fully intended to send to you—my poor excuse is that soon after I wrote, I understood that the publication that was to contain a Life was already in the press and that therefore I must necessarily be too late.—I now hear that the work is for sale in the eastern Cities and have sent for a copy: the volume advertised contains "Shell[e]y, Coleridge and Keats poems."

* * * * *

Louisville May 11th 1832

My dear Sir

* * * * *

Do you hear anything of Severn, I am anxious to have some *painting* of his, for which I desire to pay *well*, he was kind to John, and is the last link of association in my mind with John and life—could you put me in the way of obtaining *one*, what are his circumstances—I dislike Brown, I think with cause—

* * * * *

Louisville November 23rd. 1833.

My dear Dilke

* * * * *

You and poor *John* were the only ones who looked upon my American expedition as reasonable and proper, poor John is gone and I grieve to say with incorrect impressions of my worthiness, you are still living and I am sure well pleased and gratified that the result has proved so much to my benefit.

* * * * *

I feel anxious in some way to benefit Severn for his great kindness to John, I will try and manage it in future, his behaviour is strange and incomprehensible. I cannot forgive Brown for helping to poison John's mind against me, altho' I feel thankful for his kindness to him I am illiberal enough to suppose he had a selfish motive therein. However if he had the virtues of a Howard I could not forgive him for his susp[icions] of my motives in that particular. When I left Hampstead I thought I had a complete copy of "Otho," John took some pa[ins] to get the sheets together, copied what was deficient and [made] the whole, as he said perfect, when I arrived home I fo[und] many sheets missing, I suspected Brown had abstracted [them]. I may not perhaps do him justice, I may be meeting [out the] same measure to him that he meeted [*sic*] to me, and regret that any cause should have occur[r]ed to sever so long a friendship between you.

Decr. 14th. Do you hear any thing of Haslam—Poor Rice is gone, he was indeed a noble fellow. I believe I must retract the above severity against Brown, since writing it, I have been looking over John's correspondence in which he dwells so much on his kindness that I must perforce acquit, and *try* to like him. Has any one got a copy of John's unpublished works? I suppose I must suspend my curiosity untill I can cross the broad Atlantic.

* * * * *

Louisville. March 14th 1836.

My dear Dilke

* * * * *

My mind has become uneasy lest my "time should come" before I have done my duty in publishing a biography of John worthy of him, and either a complete edition of his works, or at least such as have not been already published. I wish to manage so as to perform this duty with the shortest possible absence from home. I cannot do it as it should be done without your advice and assistance; I *beleive* [*sic*] that it will afford you much pleasure to be instrumental in accomplishing such an object, and I *hope* you still have that kindly feeling towards me, that will induce you to think ahead for me so far as to save me as much time as possible, *beleiving* and sanguinely *hoping* this need I make any apology for claiming so much of your attention? I am not able to write such a biography as should be written, I have not made any notes for one, I depend upon my memory for early incidents and upon a selection from John's correspondence to make the biography interesting. If neither of his early and talented friends will undertake the work, I am anxious to assist and remunerate any man of taste and talent who will. The slow exchange of letters would create so much delay that I enter into some particulars with the view of setting the business afloat immediately, should you be willing to assist, and have the time to devote to it. Will Taylor give up, or sell the poems he advertized for publication? I presume that set of manuscripts will contain all the poems he thought worthy of publication. You know that he advanced John £150 on them, which 150£ I have paid. I am however willing to buy them of him if he is so mean as to require it. I have an imperfect copy of *Otho* much of it the original composition, Brown has a perfect copy, and has I believe some ownership right to it, perhaps one half, will he furnish a copy, or sell his interest? Unless these Gentlemen will facilitate the operation there will be considerable difficulty in collecting the materials.

Had I better publish a complete edition of all John's works, or a selection of the best of those published or unpublished, or only the latter? Do I pray you *think out* this to me most important affair. It is useless for me to dwell on the minutia of this undertaking to *you* who will at a glance see more into it than I have been able to imagine after years of study. At what season had I better be in London. Give me some idea of the cost of collecting materials, writing biography and the terms on which the work can be published in handsome style, the publisher to keep the whole impression; I take it as a matter of course that the sale would not pay expenses, at what sum would a publisher risk the publication?

* * * * *

Louisville March 1. 1838.

My dear Dilke

* * * * *

I received a number of the Atheneum [*sic*], and observed the notice "that G. K. of Louisville should be attended to." I have reflected a great deal about publishing the life, and works of my brother, but not having the slightest idea what quantity or description of materials can be got in the shape of letters, posthumous poems &c. whether "Otho" can be obtained from Brown, and whether a competent writer among his old friends will undertake the work, I am altogether at a loss what to calculate on. It is true I have in John's letters to Tom, and myself got a considerable fund of most excellent and interesting matter, but they must be weeded, much more could undoubtedly be obtained that would form a book worthy of him.

If I should come to England, I could not remain there long enough to collect, assort, arrange, and publish, and besides I am entirely incompetent, wanting talent and experience in such matters. I expected from your kindness all information and counsel, and have less hope of accomplishing the object than when the duty first pressed itself on my mind, inasmuch as your almost complete silence causes me to fear that you will not give the assistance I hoped for. Who else am I to look to for advice and sympathy?

* * * * *

With best wishes for the welfare and happiness of yourself and Mrs. Dilke I remain

Your sincere Friend
Geo. Keats.

LIST SHOWING THE SOURCES FROM WHICH THE LETTERS IN VOLUMES III AND IV HAVE BEEN OBTAINED.[1]

VOLUME III.

1. Manuscript.
*2. Haydon's Correspondence.
*3. Life, Letters &c.
4. Manuscript.
5. Life, Letters &c.
6. Manuscript.
7. Life, Letters &c.
8. Hunt's Lord Byron &c. and Correspondence.
*9. Life, Letters &c.
10. Do.
11. Do.
12. Do.
13. Do.
14. Manuscript.
*15. Life, Letters &c.
16. Do.
17. Do.
*18. Papers of a Critic.
19. Life, Letters &c.
20. Do.
21. Do.
22. Life, Letters &c.
23. Manuscript.
24. Life, Letters &c.
25. Do.
26. Do.
27. Do.
28. Do.
29. Do.
30. Do.
31. Do.
*32. Do.
33. Do.
34. Do.
35. Manuscript.
36. Life, Letters &c.
*37. Haydon's Autobiography.
38. Manuscript.
39. Life, Letters &c.
40. Do.
*41. Haydon's Correspondence.
42. Life, Letters &c.
43. Do.

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[1] In many instances letters which have already appeared in print have now been collated with the originals. An asterisk is set against the numbers of those which have been revised or added to on manuscript authority.

VOLUME III—*continued.*

44. Life, Letters &c.
45. Do.
46. Do.
47. Do.
48. Do.
49. Do.
50. Manuscript.
51. Life, Letters &c.
52. Do.
53. Manuscript.
54. Do.
55. Life, Letters &c.
56. Do.
57. Manuscript.
58. Life, Letters &c.
59. Manuscript.
60. Do.
61. Do.
62. Life, Letters &c.
*63. Papers of a Critic.
64. Life, Letters &c.
65. Manuscript.
66. Life, Letters &c.
67. Manuscript.
68. Do.
69. Life, Letters &c.
70. Do.
71. Manuscript.
72. Life, Letters &c.
73. Manuscript.
74. Life, Letters &c.
75. Manuscript.
*76. Haydon's Correspondence.
77. Manuscript.
*78. Haydon's Correspondence.
79. Manuscript.
80. Do.
*81. Haydon's Correspondence.
*82. Do.
*83. Papers of a Critic.
84. Life, Letters &c.
85. Manuscript.
86. Life, Letters &c.
87. Manuscript.
88. Do.
89. Do.
90. Do.
91. Do.
92. Do.
93. Do.
94. Do.
95. Do.
96. Do.
97. Do.
98. Do.
99. Do.
100. Do.
101. Do.
102. Life, Letters &c.
*103. Do.
104. Do.
105. Do.
106. Do.
107. Manuscript.
108. Life, Letters &c.
109. Do.
*110. Do.
111. Do.
112. Do.

VOLUME IV.

113. The World (New York Newspaper).
*114. Life, Letters &c.
*115. Haydon's Correspondence.
116. Manuscript.

VOLUME IV—*continued.*

117. Manuscript.
118. Do.
119. Life, Letters &c.
120. Manuscript.
121. Do.
122. Do.
123. The World (New York Newspaper) and The Philobiblion.
124. Manuscript.
125. Do.
126. Do.
127. Do.
128. Life, Letters &c.
129. Manuscript.
130. Do.
131. Do.
*132. Life, Letters &c.
133. Manuscript.
134. Do.
135. Do.
136. Do.
137. Manuscript.
138. Do.
*139. Life, Letters &c.
140. Do.
141. Do.
142. Manuscript.
143. Do.
*144. Haydon's Correspondence.
145. Manuscript.
146. Do.
147. Shelley Memorials.
148. Life, Letters &c.
149. Do.
150. Do.
151. Manuscript.
152. Life, Letters &c.
153. Manuscript.
*154. Life, Letters &c.
155. Manuscript.
156. Life, Letters &c.
157. Do.

LETTERS TO FANNY BRAWNE.

Number III and Number XXXVI are now first given from the manuscripts. The rest are reprinted from the volume which I published in 1877 under the title of *Letters of John Keats to Fanny Brawne.*

ADDENDA.

WHILE these volumes have been passing through the press various items have of course come under my notice for the first time. Some of these I have been able to introduce into the volumes in natural order: others are inserted here. To the following curious sonnet Miss Charlotte Reynolds has directed my attention. It was addressed by Keats to a cat belonging to Mrs. Reynolds of Little Britain, the mother of his friend John Hamilton Reynolds and of my kind correspondent. Mrs. Reynolds communicated it to her son-in-law Thomas Hood, who published it in *The Comic Annual* for 1830.

SONNET.

TO A CAT.

CAT! who has[t] pass'd thy grand clima[c]teric,
How many mice and rats hast in thy days
Destroy'd?—How many tit bits stolen? Gaze
With those bright languid segments green, and prick
Those velvet ears—but pr'ythee do not stick
Thy latent talons in me—and upraise
Thy gentle mew—and tell me all thy frays
Of fish and mice, and rats and tender chick.

Nay, look not down, nor lick thy dainty wrists—
For all the wheezy asthma,—and for all
Thy tail's tip is nick'd off—and though the fists
Of many a maid has given thee many a maul,
Still is that fur as soft as when the lists
In youth thou enter'dst on glass bottled wall.

Had I noticed it in time, I should have included in the Appendix to Volume I the following

SONNET,

WRITTEN IN KEATS'S "ENDYMION,"

BY THOMAS HOOD.

I SAW pale Dian, sitting by the brink
Of silver falls, the overflow of fountains
From cloudy steeps; and I grew sad to think
Endymion's foot was silent on those mountains
And he but a hush'd name, that Silence keeps
In dear remembrance,—lonely, and forlorn,
Singing it to herself until she weeps
Tears, that perchance still glisten in the morn:—
And as I mused, in dull imaginings,
There came a flash of garments, and I knew
The awful Muse by her harmonious wings
Charming the air to music as she flew—
Anon there rose an echo through the vale
Gave back Endymion in a dreamlike tale.

Mrs. S. G. Ward of New York has been good enough to communicate to me through Miss Emma Lazarus some interesting rejected readings of the Ode to Autumn. In 1838 George Keats presented to Mrs. Ward (then Miss Barker of New Orleans) his brother's original manuscript of this poem. The manuscript in its final state corresponds in the main with the poem as issued by Keats in 1820 in the *Lamia* volume (see Volume II, pages 137-8); but there are several cancellings; and the under-mentioned variations from the published text are gathered from the manuscript in question:—

Stanza I; line 4, *The vines with fruit*; line 6, *sweetness* for *ripeness*; line 8, *white* for *sweet*;

Stanza II; line 1, *Who hath not seen thee, for thy haunts are many*; line 2, *for thee* instead of *abroad*; after line 4—

> While bright the sun slants through the husky barn
>   Or sound asleep in a half reaped field
> Dozed with red poppies while thy reaping hook
>   Spares from some slumbrous minutes while warm slumbers
>   creep...

and again

>   Spares for some slumbrous minutes the next swath;

then in line 11, *oozing* for *oozings*;

Stanza III; lines 3 and 4,

> While a gold cloud gilds the soft dying day
>   Touching the stubble plains with rosy hue—

line 6, *on thee borne aloft*; line 7, *lives and dies*; line 9, *again full soft* for *with treble soft*; line 11, *And new flock still*...

Mr. Robert Browning has found, since Volume II was printed off, the letter from Leigh Hunt containing the pedigree of the lock of Milton's hair celebrated in Keats's poem (Volume II, pages 249-51) and in Hunt's sonnets (Volume II, pages 563-5). This pedigree, though not sufficiently authoritative to satisfy a rigid regard for the ordinary laws of evidence, was surely an ample justification for the faith of the imaginative Keats: it is as follows:

"P.S. 'More last words'! I find that I must deprive Mrs. Jago of another bit of her space; but the page is of a good size, and I hope she can write as small as myself, and so retain space enough. It is to say a word respecting the lock of Milton's hair. Mrs. Jago asked me the other day, very naturally, about its authenticalness; and this has made me consider that you and Mrs. Browning might as naturally, indeed still more so, as you were so good as to accept my rude bit of pull from it, be glad to be told what I told her. The evidence simply amounts to this; though I accepted it, as I think you will do, with a trusting as well as a willing faith. The lock was given me, together with those of Dr. Johnson and Swift, by the late Dr. Batty, the physician, a man of excellent character, to whom I was *to bequeath them back* if he survived me, which he has not done. To Dr. Batty the three locks were given by Hoole, the translator of Tasso, &c., and Hoole, though a bad translator, was a very honest man. And to Hoole they were given by Dr. Johnson himself, whose scrupulous veracity as to matters of fact is well known. I forget at this distance of time what Batty further said to me on the subject, for it was a long while ago, and I was in a confusion of pleasure at the moment; but my impression is that the locks of Milton and Swift were given to Johnson while he was writing the 'Lives of the Poets,' and that Milton's was one, or part of one; which had been at the back of a miniature of the poet belonging to Addison. Addison, you know, personally knew and took an interest in the welfare of Milton's youngest surviving daughter, Deborah. I do not find any mention of him among the possessors of portraits of Milton, and it does not seem likely that the miniature and the lock would become divorced. Yet I think you will agree with me that there is strong presumptive evidence in these three descents of the belief on the part of true and honourable men, one of whom asks me to bequeath the lock back to him in case I died first; nor do I myself feel the least doubt of the lock, short of positive certainty."

The long letter to which this is a postscript appeared in *The Athenæum* for the 7th of July 1883.

GENERAL INDEX.

[As the writings of Keats have not, as far as I am aware, been indexed before, I have aimed at making the present as nearly as possible a complete subject index, not only of all his poems and letters, but also of the numerous biographic and illustrative documents given in the appendices. The Roman figures show the volume, the Arabic figures the page; but, in the few references to the preliminary matter paged in Roman figures, both volume and page are shown by Roman figures, the higher number being, however, always that of the page. A separate index of first lines will be found in Volume I.—H. B. F.]

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END OF VOLUME IV.

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CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

Volume I, page 98, line 2 from foot, for *beforeme* read *before me.*
„ „ „ 174, „ 12, for *magnifi'd* read *magnify'd.*
„ II, „ 56, last line, for *reading* read *readings.*
„ „ „ 143, line 2 from foot, for *1830* read *1820.*
„ „ „ 196, „ 32, insert commas after *incense* and *hills.*
„ „ „ 272, „ 1, insert ! after *Maia.*
„ „ „ 317, „ 1 of note, for *December* read *September.*
„ „ „ 357, „ 8 from foot, insert *it* after *which.*
„ „ „ 362, add to note—“It was published in February 1846, with a letter from Severn, in *The Union Magazine.*”
„ „ „ 398, line 147, for *Ay* read *Aye.*
„ „ „ 496, „ 6 of Stanza XXI, insert) at end.
„ „ „ 515, „ 4, for *Boswell's*), read *Boswell's*,)
„ III, „ 137, note, for *9th* read *8th.*
„ „ „ 167, line 2, for *Kircudbright* read *Kirk[c]udbright.*
„ „ „ 168, „ 20, for *Kirkudbright* read *Kirk[c]udbright.*
„ „ „ 193, „ 4 from foot, for *Marianne* read *Mariane.*
„ „ „ 235. The foot-note needs modification. According to the baptismal register of St. Botolph's Church, Bishopsgate, Keats was born on the 31st of October 1795. Either, therefore, he was mistaken about his birthday; or he finished the letter on the 31st without making a fresh entry of date, and had *not*, presumably, called on Mrs. Wylie in the interim.
„ „ „ 283, line 17, insert catch-figure *1* at end.
„ „ „ 308, „ 2 from foot of note, for *journal—letter* read *journal-letter.*
„ „ „ 318, line 2 of note, for *Marianne* read *Mariane.*
„ IV, „ 92, „ 6 of note, for *Gisborne's* read *Gisbornes'.*
„ „ „ 157, last line, for *XXVII* read *XXVIII.*
„ „ „ 274, line 10 of note, for *II* read *III.*
„ „ „ 276, „ 8 of the notes, after *correction* add *as to origin*; and at the end of the foot-note add, “According to the register of baptisms at St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, he was born on the 31st of October 1795.”
„ „ „ 302, line 3, after *1795*, insert catch-figure *1*; and supply foot-note, “According to the baptismal register of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, he was born on the 31st of October 1795.”
„ „ „ 334, line 2 of note, for *II* read *III.*
„ „ „ 441, between lines 11 and 12, insert “Dedication of **ENDYMION** to, i, 109, 117; iii, 142, 144”.

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